ROCK CANDY

FOR THOSE WHO WERE RAISED ON ROCK

August - September 2019

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RATT
'OUT OF THE CELLAR'

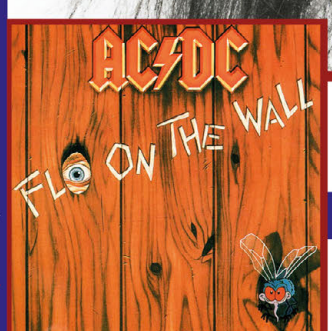
RUSS BALLARD
ROCK'N'ROLL HITMAKER

QUIET RIOT
FROZEN IN TIME

Free

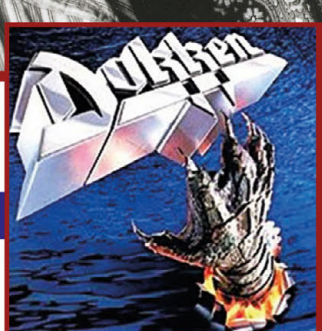
ALRIGHT THEN – LEGENDS NOW

PAUL RODGERS AND SIMON KIRKE EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS



AC/DC
'FLY ON THE WALL' REAPPRAISED – DRUMMER SIMON WRIGHT GIVES US HIS PERSPECTIVE

DOKKEN
ROCK'S LONGEST FEUD – DON DOKKEN AND GEORGE LYNCH TALK TURKEY



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ROCK CANDY

WELCOME

THE CLASSIC ROCK LIVE scene is positively exploding. Fortunately, living in London I've had the opportunity to attend a handful of truly magnificent gigs recently alongside many hundreds – often thousands – of fellow fans. It all kicked off with a unique show at the prestigious London Palladium, billed as 'An Evening With Styx'. The '70s pomp rockers were presenting a set of their greatest hits, together with a few new pearls. Despite the fact that the band has been performing successfully with a revised line up for many years, the ghost of original frontman Dennis DeYoung still looms large. Dennis has, on more than one occasion, signalled his willingness to heal old wounds, but the band have so far resisted his overtures. I personally miss his eccentric flamboyance and theatrics, but that in no way reduces the effectiveness of the existing band, including the effervescent Tommy Shaw, guitar slinger JY Young and 'new boy' Lawrence Gowan. With a wealth of choice material to draw from – the highlights for me were songs from 'The Grand Illusion' album – Styx delivered big time. This show really was a sight and sound for sore eyes and ears.

NEXT UP was an extraordinary outdoor gig headlined by Toto, a band I've followed closely, and in some respects have got to know up close and personal over the years. This particular show was made even more special by its location, the grounds of military retirement headquarters The Royal Hospital Chelsea. It's the home of the debonair Chelsea Pensioners in their amazing red coats, and the setting befitted Toto's brand of high-class pop and prog perfectly. Naturally they played a blinder of a set, even bringing out 'English Eyes' from the criminally underrated 'Turn Back' album, and the occasion was marred only by unseasonal damp and cold weather. Even though mainstay David Paich was not in attendance due to ill health, guitarist extraordinaire Steve Lukather more than made up for his absence with much six-string razzle-dazzle.

FINALLY – AND thanks to the band's guitarist Ricky Medlocke – I attended one of the final Lynyrd Skynryd shows at a sold-out Wembley Arena. The gig was magnificent, the choice of material was perfect and the performance was exemplary. It featured one of the best stage shows I've seen for a long time, which included a huge circular screen showing home movie clips from the '70s, complete with hi-jinx, clowning around and heartfelt visual tributes to fallen band members. It was, it must be said, emotional.

Derek O.

Derek Oliver – Master Of Mayhem
derekoliver@rockcandymag.com

THIS ISSUE'S BIG QUESTION – WHO'S YOUR FAVOURITE ROCK VOCALIST OF ALL TIME?

ROCK CANDY
HARD, SWEET & STICKY

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

I grant you, it doesn't take a great deal of creative brainpower to sit down and write an Editor's Letter about the issue's cover stars. It's a pretty obvious idea. But for RC15 I simply couldn't look a gift horse in the mouth. Free happen to be not just one of *my* favourite bands, but perhaps *the* collective fave group of the entire *Rock Candy Mag* team. And why might that be? Well perhaps it boils down to this. Through the alchemy of four complementary musicians, Free managed to create a kind of rock that has always stood defiantly outside of the genre's acknowledged touch points. Heavy rock is generally abrasive, fast and not a little wild. But when vocalist Paul Rodgers, bassist Andy Fraser, guitarist Paul Kossoff and drummer Simon Kirke all came together, something otherworldly happened. The sound Free created was most often slow, evidently soulful, almost ethereal. And while there was no doubt that the music was tough-sounding, nonetheless it had a certain feminine, graceful quality that took it to places of emotional resonance few rock bands ever manage to find.

More often than not it's the silences rather than the noises that make Free songs so captivating. And there's no finer example than 'Mr. Big', a seething cauldron of resentment that stealthily gets right under your skin. Mind you, 'I'll Be Creepin'' or 'The Stealer' could give 'Mr. Big' a run for its money, both of them prime examples of Free's 'less is more' ethos as the musicians show themselves ever ready to leave egos at the door for the ultimate betterment of the song.

Could this have had anything to do with Paul Kossoff's guitar playing? While all of Rodgers, Kirke and Fraser could lay reasonable claim to rock virtuoso status, you'd be hard-pushed to cite Kossoff as anywhere near the top of the guitaring pile in terms of technique alone. And yet, and yet... For sheer emotional depth and ability to wring a crazy amount of feeling out of every single note, Paul Kossoff is right up there with any legend of the instrument you may care to mention.

You get the idea, then, that Free were very special. That's why we've dedicated our coveted cover slot and 12 magnificent pages to the band, complete with brand-new, in-depth interviews with Paul Rodgers and Simon Kirke that give you a fascinating insight into the world of this most magical of bands. I've loved working on this story. I hope you get as much joy out of reading it.

Howard Johnson – Editor

Email me at **hojo@rockcandymag.com**

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Songs that feature food and some great Christian rock. Nothing links these two writer playlists – aside from the fact that you can check them out on YouTube. But that's more than enough for us...

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You're a rock'n'roll know all? Then you'll finish the *Rock Candy Mag* crossword in double quick time!

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It's absolutely the quickest and easiest way of getting your bi-monthly dose of rock!

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ROCK CANDY VIDEO PLAYLISTS

THERE'S GREAT ROCK MUSIC ALL OVER YOUTUBE, THE PROBLEM IS FINDING IT. SO LET US TAKE THE PAIN OUT OF SEARCHING WITH OUR EASY-TO-ACCESS VIDEO PLAYLISTS. SIMPLY TYPE THE WORDS IN BRACKETS INTO YOUR YOUTUBE SEARCH BOX... AND ROCK!

FIVE FOOD-BASED FANCIES

Chosen by Alison Joy

Def Leppard – 'Pour Some Sugar On Me' (Pour Some Sugar on Me live Mountain View 1988 Hysteria Tour)
On a sticky-sweet California night we have the Leps doing their stadium-slaying '80s thang: Joe (quality mullet), Steve (über cool), Phil (no shirt), Rick A (Thundergod) and... hang on... where's Rick Savage? Sadly, there's just one brief appearance for super Sav; maybe Sheffield Wednesday were playing and he nipped off to check the score?

Van Halen – 'Ice Cream Man' (VAN HALEN-Ice Cream Man (Largo 1982))
There's not much chance of Dave Lee Roth turning up in your street with a bottle of squirty strawberry sauce and some sprinkles, but this crowd in Maryland, USA were most definitely eating out of his hand. It's not the best quality vid, but that hardly matters; Dave is a camera magnet and his force is strong. Do you want a flake with that?

Warrant – 'Cherry Pie' (Warrant – Cherry Pie Live (Rare Version))
Filmed in Tokyo in 1991, this is a tough one. It kicks off with singer Jani Lane cheerily trading vocal licks with Joey Allen's stars & stripes guitar, but as soon as he introduces the song you can see Lane mentally switch off. Despite it being a huge hit, and despite it coming from his own pen, Jani (RIP) hated 'Cherry Pie' – so, yeah, a tough one to put your heart and soul into. Not their fruity best.

David Lee Roth – 'Hot Dog And A Shake' (David Lee Roth – Hot Dog & A Shake (Live 1988))
There's a 'shake' of a different kind in the hand of our filmmaker here, as he/she has all the steadiness of someone who's just been tasered. Both Dave and guitarist Steve Vai are well endowed with stage presence, but there's no chance for drummer Gregg Bissonette to catch the eye: he spends the whole time hidden behind a speaker. Poor sausage.

Van Halen – 'Poundcake' (Van Halen Poundcake @ the MTV awards 1991)
Yep, it's Van Halen again, but this time with super-cheery Sammy Hagar up front. He might be dressed in his grandpa's mismatched old hand-me-downs – but oh, that voice! Tight, effortless and undeniably classy (the song, not Sammy's wardrobe.) I'll definitely have a slice of that.

FIVE FAB CHRISTIAN ROCKERS

Chosen by Rob Evans

Whitecross – 'In The Kingdom' (Whitecross – In The Kingdom)
Illinois band Whitecross was put together by vocalist Scott Wenzel and guitarist Rex Carroll back in 1985, and this song is surely the Christian equivalent of Bon Jovi's 'Wanted Dead Or Alive'. The video features the band portraying themselves as God's cowboys as they deliver their heartfelt Christian message to the Whitecross faithful. There's no denying it's powerful stuff!

Whiteheart – 'Independence Day' (WHITEHEART – Independence Day (HQ Music Video))
Whiteheart were arguably one of Christian AOR's biggest bands, and this track comes from one of their best albums, 1990's 'Powerhouse'. The video starts with a bunch of stock images of fighter planes and bombs before the band burst into life performing in a disused warehouse, while telling us about our need to throw off life's shackles. Or something. Don't miss out on mulleted vocalist Rick Florian's bizarre dancing, which really is a sight to behold.

Idle Cure – 'Breakaway' (Idle Cure – Breakaway)
Now what have we here? Well it sure sounds like a Christian version of Def Leppard in their '80s synthetic pomp. Taken from Idle Cure's eponymous debut album from 1986, 'Breakaway' sees the California band delivering a message that crime really doesn't pay. The video's main character joins a gang, buys a gun and commits a robbery in a convenience store – only to get caught in the act by those pesky cops! But don't worry, as it turns out all this naughtiness is just some sort of bad dream, and our hero walks away to pray another day.

Shout – 'Give Me An Answer' (Shout – Give Me An Answer)
Shout vocalist Ken Tamplin might be playing Christian rock, but we're not sure God would be too happy with the hairdo he rocked in the '80s, given that it looks like the amount of hairspray he used destroyed the ozone layer single-handedly. We'll let Ken off, though, because he shows himself to be quite adept in the guitar department on this riff rocker of Coverdale-esque proportions. The song is loud, but it's nowhere near as loud as Tamplin's sparkly blue jacket, just one of a selection he wears in this flashy performance video.

Michael W Smith – 'Secret Ambition' (Michael W Smith – Secret Ambition – Change Your World Live)
Mr Smith was the poster boy for Christian music in the '80s and early '90s and has sold over 18 million albums during the course of his career, which isn't to be sniffed at. This video goes some way to explaining why. Filmed in front of 15,000 devout followers at the Patriot Center in Fairfax, Virginia back in 1993, here Michael and an onstage cast of thousands deliver a fine piece of perfectly crafted pop rock.

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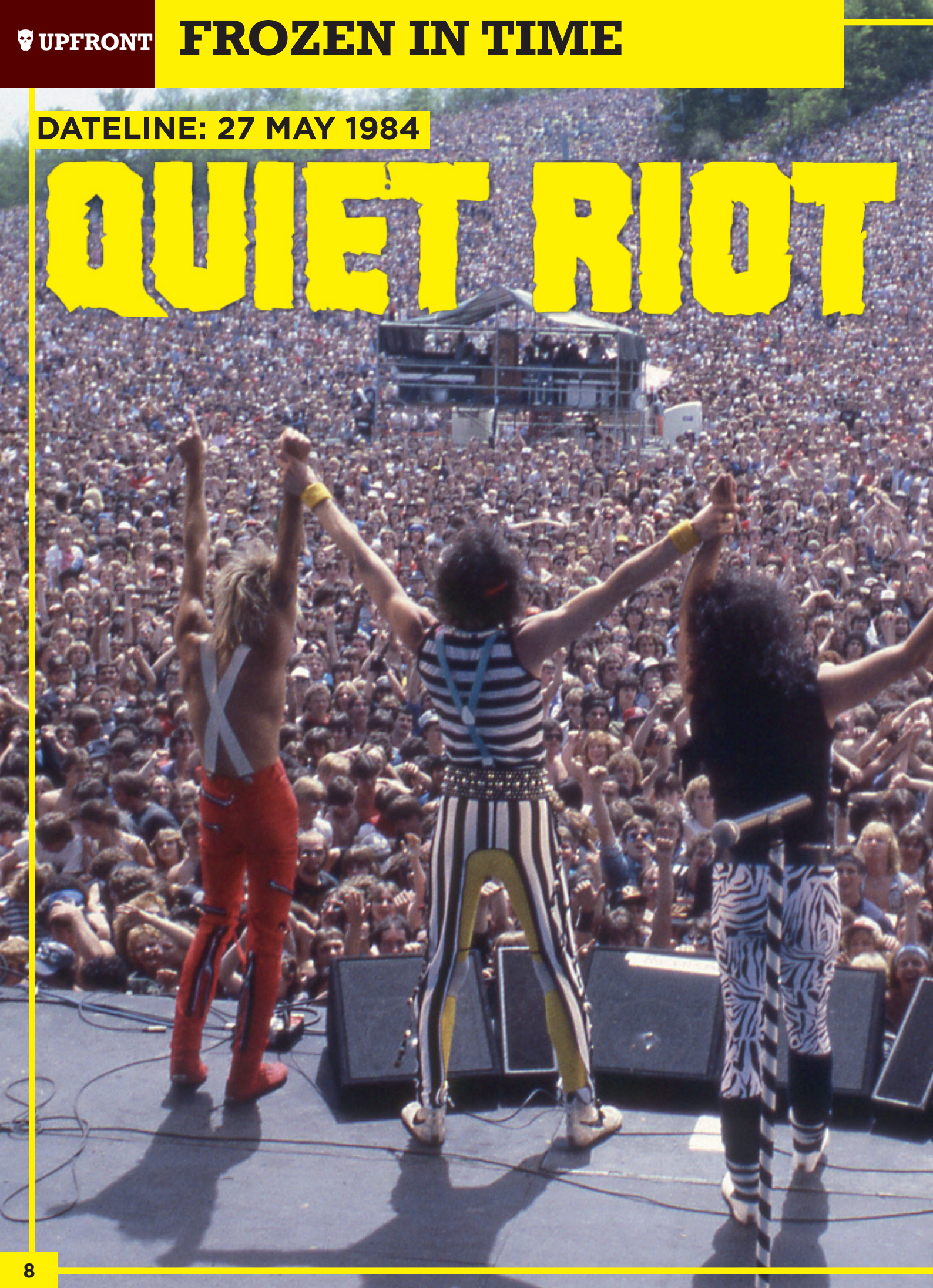
FROZEN IN TIME

DATELINE: 27 MAY 1984

QUIET RIOT



Has there ever been a more evocative shot of rock's absolute heyday?

IF ANYBODY EVER ASKS you why the '80s rock scene holds a special place in your heart, you could do a lot worse than show them this photograph. The daft trousers, the crazy hair, the adoring public stretching as far as the eye can see. This remarkable image is enough to take you straight back to a period when rock was fun and no one – least of all the bands – took life too seriously. Mind you, wearing those pants how could they?!

IN THE general scheme of things, Quiet Riot was a fairly ephemeral band. It isn't a group that trips off the tongue when name-checking a who's who of classic rock. Yet for a short period of time in 1983 the Los Angeles four-piece that had once featured guitarist Randy Rhoads was a record-breaking act, the first US group to have a heavy metal album – 'Metal Health' – reach the number one slot on the fabled US *Billboard* chart. Their cover of Slade's 'Cum On Feel The Noize' had been all over influential video channel MTV and teed up vocalist Kevin DuBrow, guitarist Carlos Cavazo, drummer Frankie Banali and bassist Rudy Sarzo for the insane level of success that would soon become commonplace for metal bands in the US in the mid-'80s.

QUIET RIOT had suffered plenty of setbacks in the decade before they had their day in the sun, though. While fellow Sunset Strip hopefuls Van Halen quickly became America's darlings in the late '70s, Quiet Riot had to slog their way to the top, recording two albums for Sony – the prosaically titled 'Quiet Riot' and 'Quiet Riot II' – that were only released in Japan. Frustrated by a lack of progress, Rhoads left to work with Ozzy Osbourne, and Rudy Sarzo – who'd only joined Quiet Riot after the recording of the first two albums – soon followed. The band broke up in 1980 and that appeared to be that.

AFTER FAILING to get anywhere with a new act named DuBrow, the vocalist eventually resurrected Quiet Riot with Rhoads's blessing in early 1982. In March of that year Randy died in a plane crash, and in the ensuing emotional turmoil Sarzo left Ozzy's group. Yet something good emerged out of this awful tragedy when Sarzo re-joined Quiet Riot, the band signed to producer Spencer Proffer's Pasha label (a Sony subsidiary), and suddenly found themselves with a hot single and album on their hands. It was a true 'rags to riches' moment.

THIS PHOTOGRAPH, taken by the band's friend Ron Sobol – their visual chronicler from the earliest days – captures Quiet Riot at the height of their wild ride, onstage at the American Rock Festival in Kalamazoo, Michigan. The bill also featured RATT, Accept, Night Ranger, Mötley Crüe, Ozzy Osbourne, and Triumph. Music has changed so fundamentally in the 35 years since this shot was taken that it's hard to imagine metal ever again having such an incredible hold on the world's youth. But at least we can say we were there when rock truly did rule the globe!

HOWARD JOHNSON

Photo: Ron Sobol

STEP BACK IN TIME

FEBRUARY–MARCH 1986

ROCK CANDY'S DAVE LING LEAFS THROUGH THE BACK PAGES OF THE UK ROCK PRESS TO BRING THE BIG NEWS ITEMS OF THE DAY BACK TO LIFE AND ANALYSE HOW THOSE STORIES REALLY PLAYED OUT…

Ozzy in full '80s mode!

OZZY'S 'THE ULTIMATE SIN'. BETTER THAN SABBATH?

DATELINE: 20 FEBRUARY–5 MARCH 1986

MAGAZINE: *KERRANG!*

IN THE EARLY PART of 1986 Black Sabbath's former lead singer Ozzy Osbourne found himself doing musical battle with his erstwhile sparring partner Tony Iommi. As the guitarist ploughed on using the Sabbath name on an album called 'Seventh Star' (billed as 'Black Sabbath Featuring Tony Iommi') it was nonetheless clear that Ozzy's solo career was of far greater interest to rock fans. Both musicians featured in the same issue of *Kerrang!*, but there was only a brief chat with Tony ahead of a bigger story a fortnight later. There Iommi would try hard to convince the mag's readers that his new musical partner, Glenn Hughes, was "getting himself together" for a tour.

YET IT was Ozzy, not Iommi, who featured on *Kerrang!*'s cover, promoting his fourth solo studio album, 'The Ultimate Sin'. *Kerrang!* sent writer Mark Putterford and photographer Ross Halfin to the singer's "fabulous Hampstead home" to see what the Double O had to say. That Putterford considered 'The Ultimate Sin' to be "as good as, if not better than, anything the Wizard Of Ozz has done before" got proceedings off to a winning start. Osbourne was extremely proud of his new baby, insisting that he'd been waiting "forever and a day" to make such a record.

"It's strange for me, because this is the first time I've put myself in someone else's hands – Ron Nevison – and I'm very pleased with the way the production turned out," he said. "It has some good songs and I hope it'll do well. It's better than any Sabbath album I made."

The album title referred to atomic warfare, a theme also discussed in a song titled 'Thank God For The Bomb'. Ozzy believed it was inevitable that somebody someday would push a button and blow us all to kingdom come.

"Gaddafi will do it," he predicted, referring to the eccentric Libyan dictator of the day. "That guy would be the greatest rock star in the world. He's madder than I am. He should stop f*cking around buying guns and get a guitar."

ALTHOUGH GUITARIST Jake E Lee remained in Ozzy's line-up, there were, nevertheless, personnel changes to discuss. Since the previous studio album, 1983's 'Bark At The Moon', Osbourne had dispensed with the services of bass player Bob Daisley, the former Rainbow man being replaced by Englishman Phil Soussan. Meanwhile, Tommy Aldridge's place on the drum stool had been taken by Randy Castillo, previously with Lita Ford's band.

"Phil Soussan is a very accomplished man. He writes good stuff and he helps me to write good stuff," Ozzy explained. "He's been a wasted talent for many years." Osbourne made no apologies for the high turnover of collaborators. "I learnt from Black Sabbath that having the same musicians all the time is f*cking boring," he said. "You don't know what's on the other side of the fence until you jump over." Could Ozzy see a day when

Photos: Julia Goode

his line-up might become permanent? "No. Never, ever," he fired back. "I will be permanent, nobody else will."

OSBOURNE DID admit to having heard Sabbath's 'Seventh Star' and was decent enough to avoid being unnecessarily critical.

"I hate to say it, because I don't really get on with the guy [Tony Iommi] – I don't think he's all there – but a good album is a good album," he commented through gritted teeth. And despite attending Geezer Butler's solo gig at London's Marquee Club the previous year, Osbourne was less complimentary about his former bass-playing bandmate.

"Terry Butler is very talented – he wrote 'Paranoid' and all those songs in Sabbath – but he's been wasting his time for years and now I think it could be a bit late for him," Ozzy declared, while adding. "But if he gets the right band..."

ROCK CANDY SAYS...

FORTUNATELY FOR HUMANITY, COLONEL Gaddafi didn't incite a nuclear holocaust. And perhaps equally luckily, he didn't launch a musical career either. Ozzy Osbourne, however, still ranks highly on any list of rock's most famous luminaries – even at the grand old age of 70. Back in '86 Ozzy was clearly excited about 'The Ultimate Sin', but with the benefit of hindsight it's pretty obvious that the album was *not* better than all of the discs Osbourne made with Sabbath.

Nevertheless, 'The Ultimate Sin' safely registers among the cream of the singer's solo releases. Commercially speaking, it quickly sold a million copies, making the Top 10 on the album charts both in the UK and the United States.

TRUE TO Ozzy's statement that he wouldn't stick with a settled band, by the following year Jake E Lee had been unexpectedly fired. The guitarist went on to form Badlands with vocalist Ray Gillen, who'd previously replaced Glenn Hughes in Black Sabbath. The simmering antagonism between original Sabbath members Osbourne, Iommi and Butler couldn't last forever, though, and the original line-up reunited several times during the 1990s and beyond, sometimes with drummer Bill Ward, sometimes without. Despite the latter's glaring absence due to a "contractual dispute", Sabbath even made an all-new studio album, '13', in 2013. Rage Against The Machine's Brad Wilk filled in on drums.

DESPITE SABBATH officially stopping touring in 2017, Ozzy continues to perform around the world, though ill health did force him to postpone a recent run of American and European dates. "I'm still going to be doing gigs," he explained. "But I won't go on tour for six months at a time any more," he says. "I'd like to spend some time at home."

KOMMANDER of KAOS

MARK PUTTERFORD bites off more than he can chew when confronted by havoc-wreaking 'crafty old campaigner' and well-sussed HM veteran OZZY OSBOURNE (pictured right)

Ozzy on stage with Phil Soussan: "He writes good stuff and he helps me to write good stuff."

STEP BACK IN TIME

The "true greatness" of Mr. Mister: L-R: Steve Farris (guitar), Steve George (keyboards), Richard Page (vocals and bass), Pat Mastelotto (drums)

MR. MISTER DISPLAY "TRUE GREATNESS" AT THE MARQUEE

DATELINE: 20 MARCH–2 APRIL 1986

MAGAZINE: *KERRANG!*

LET'S NOT FORGET THAT music journalists are music fans too. So when Derek Oliver described Mr. Mister's 1986 gig at London's Marquee Club as "an experience akin to having sex with my Toto records," his unabashed enthusiasm should be seen as laudable, though admittedly a little bizarre.

Just like Toto, Mr. Mister had a background in the world of the session musician. Lead vocalist/bassist Richard Page and keyboardist Steve George had vast experience of making records in all kinds of different styles, and like Steve Lukather and Co. went on to fashion a sound in Mr. Mister that fused instant melodies with top notch pop rock. Everything was executed with superhuman levels of precision, creating something that was considered extremely hi-tech at the time.

"I defy anyone to say that Mr. Mister are anything but the most accomplished band currently invading our singles chart," Derek said in the pages of *Kerrang!* His enthusiasm for the group came at a time when Mr. Mister's second album, 'Welcome To The Real World', had spawned two hit singles – 'Broken Wings' and 'Kyrie' – with a third title, 'Is It Love', soon to follow.

SIGNIFICANTLY, OLIVER noted that "the best live sound ever" had filled the famous Wardour Street venue. On the very day that 'Kyrie' sat proudly on top of the US singles chart, the "pleased as punch" personnel from RCA Records who were in attendance at the gig were revelling in the fact that Mr. Mister seemed set fair to become "an internationally successful act and not just a US phenomenon."

The foursome dazzled the audience with an array of influences that included bands such as "Steely Dan, Saga, Chicago and Toto, right through to what might be labelled fringe rock acts like Dixie Dregs or Weather Report." But what Derek believed really separated Mr. Mister from their "many neighbours" was "true greatness, the desire to reproduce recorded music to a level not seen since Jeff Beck unleashed his 'There & Back' opus [in 1980].

"I can happily reveal that this gig was perhaps the most brilliant event approaching that dangerous element of perfection that I have ever attended," he concluded.

SUCH EMPHATIC praise simply echoed the sentiments of Oliver's fellow *Kerrang!* writer Paul Suter, who'd filed a 5-K review of 'Welcome To The Real World' a few months earlier. "Holy Sh*t! What a record," said Suter at the time. "This album is exciting, inventive and fresh, but still full of traditional style and finesse – so go out and buy the bloody thing, okay?"

ROCK CANDY SAYS...

BACK IN 1986 MR. Mister's future looked brighter than the sun. The band's pristine fusion of pop and hard rock found itself welcomed in the most unlikely of areas. Before they'd flown from California to the UK for what would turn out to be their only professional visit, the group had performed at the American Music Awards. Richard Page was astonished to notice Stevie Wonder in the front row there, dancing and singing the lyrics to 'Kyrie'. Receiving a Grammy nomination in the category of Best Pop Performance With Vocal for 'Broken Wings' was another milestone for the group.

BESIDE PLAYING the Marquee on 20 February, Mr. Mister's whistle-stop London jaunt saw the band appear on influential TV chat show *Wogan*, while also performing versions of 'Broken Wings' and 'Kyrie' on UK TV's *Saturday Live*. You can even check it out on YouTube. On the same platform you can also listen to wonderful, mixing-desk-sourced audio of two songs from the Marquee show – 'Black/White' and 'Is It Love' – showing why Derek got himself into such a lather.

EVERYTHING WASN'T quite as rosy as it seemed, though. Given the musical quality in the ranks, Mr. Mister was often in danger of losing members. Guitarist Steve Farris had been asked to replace Ace Frehley in Kiss for their 'Creatures Of The Night' album but had refused the invitation. And Page himself had previously declined offers from Toto and Chicago to replace Bobby Kimball and Peter Cetera respectively.

"I was too invested in what I was doing at that time to join another band," Page told me in a 2010 interview. "I think I made the right decision."

However, when 1987's follow-up album 'Go On...' failed to match the sales of 'Welcome To The Real World' Mr. Mister lost momentum.

"There were a lot of internal problems and Steve Farris quit," Page told me. "I was starting to feel like I didn't belong in a band anymore."

FARRIS LEFT in 1988, and despite an album called 'Pull' being fully completed with contributions from guitarist Trevor Rabin, Mr. Mister's label BMG quietly dropped the band in 1990 and the group broke up soon after. Drummer Pat Mastelotto went on to join King Crimson and 'Pull' was finally released in 2010.

That same year I asked Richard Page about the possibility of a Mr. Mister reunion. "We might do a few gigs," he told me. "We might possibly even film a live DVD, but nothing concrete has been decided." Sadly to date nothing has materialised. But we all live in hope – especially Derek Oliver!

MR. MISTER
Marquee, London

ALTHOUGH I certainly don't believe in miracles, I wouldn't be exaggerating if I said that Mr. Mister's *Marquee* performance was an experience almost akin to having sex with my Toto records. Indeed, I can happily reveal that this gig was perhaps the most brilliant event approaching that dangerous element of perfection I have ever attended.

I defy anyone to say that Mr. Mister are anything but the most accomplished 'pop' band currently invading our depressing singles chart. I'd also willingly knee in the ball-bag any earwig who would dare criticise them for having the gall to increase their musical efficiency by filling (for one night only . . .) the *Marquee* with the best live sound ever.

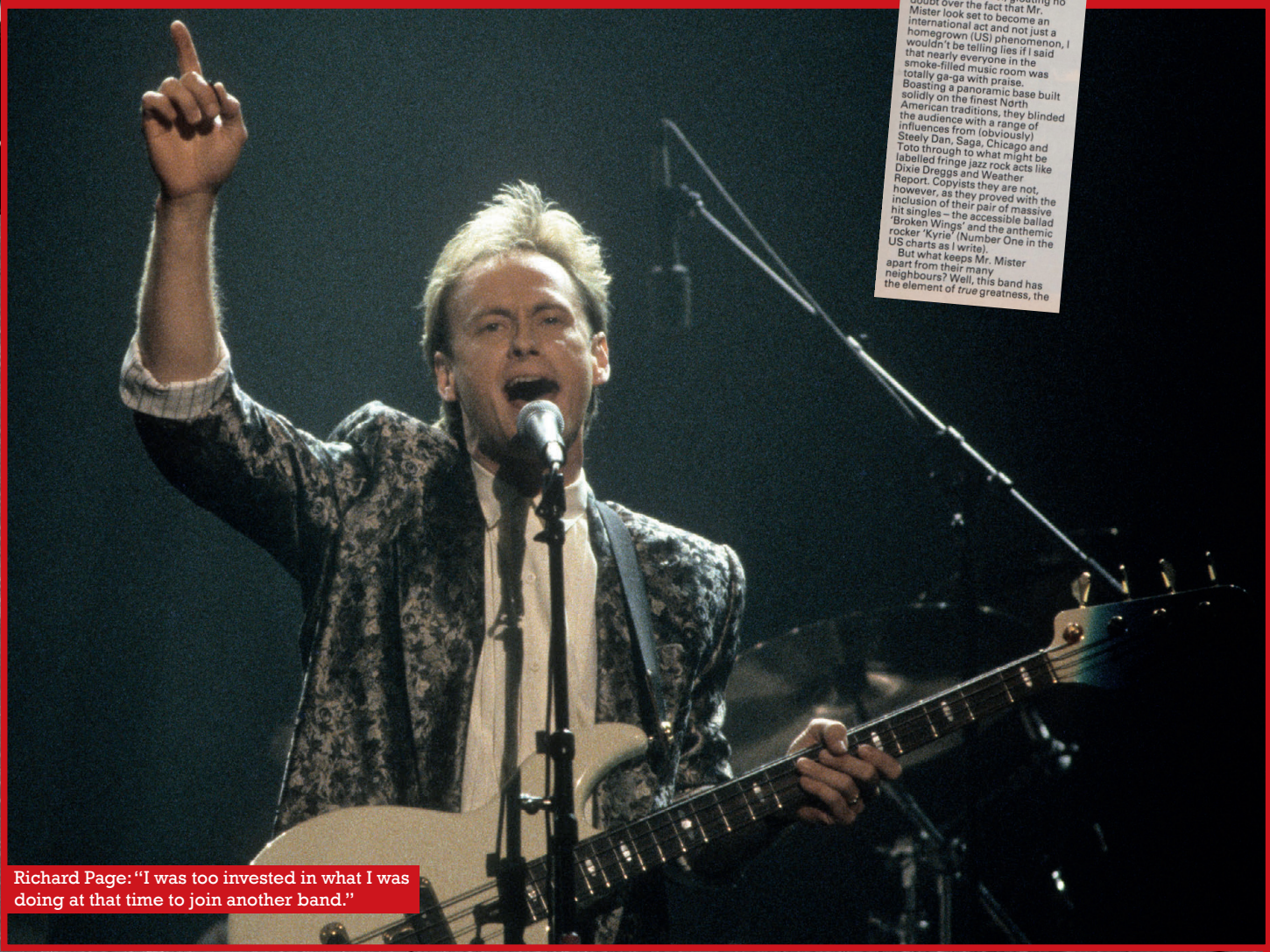
Packed out with what felt like most of *RCA*'s pleased-as-pudding personnel, gloating no doubt over the fact that Mr. Mister look set to become an international act and not just a homegrown (US) phenomenon, I wouldn't be telling lies if I said that nearly everyone in the smoke-filled music room was totally ga-ga with praise.

Boasting a panoramic base built solidly on the finest North American traditions, they blinded the audience with a range of influences from (obviously) Steely Dan, Saga, Chicago and Toto through to what might be labelled fringe jazz rock acts like Dixie Dreggs and Weather Report. Copyists they are not, however, as they proved with the inclusion of their pair of massive hit singles – the accessible ballad 'Broken Wings' and the anthemic rocker 'Kyrie' (Number One in the US charts as I write).

But what keeps Mr. Mister apart from their many neighbours? Well, this band has the element of *true* greatness, the desire to reproduce recorded music to a level not seen since Jeff Beck unleashed his 'There And Back' opus. Musicians? Yup, you guessed it, and whilst some might suggest that it's here the fault, if any, lies, I'd simply suggest they go wear a fire bucket in their gob.

Adjusting the angle of my neck, I spotted a great deal of vocal and instrumental interchange, but it was Steve Farris' biting guitar work that stood level with any big name you might care to mention, adding to an incredibly agreeable and inventive evening's entertainment. I only hope their success is not limited to a few short months.

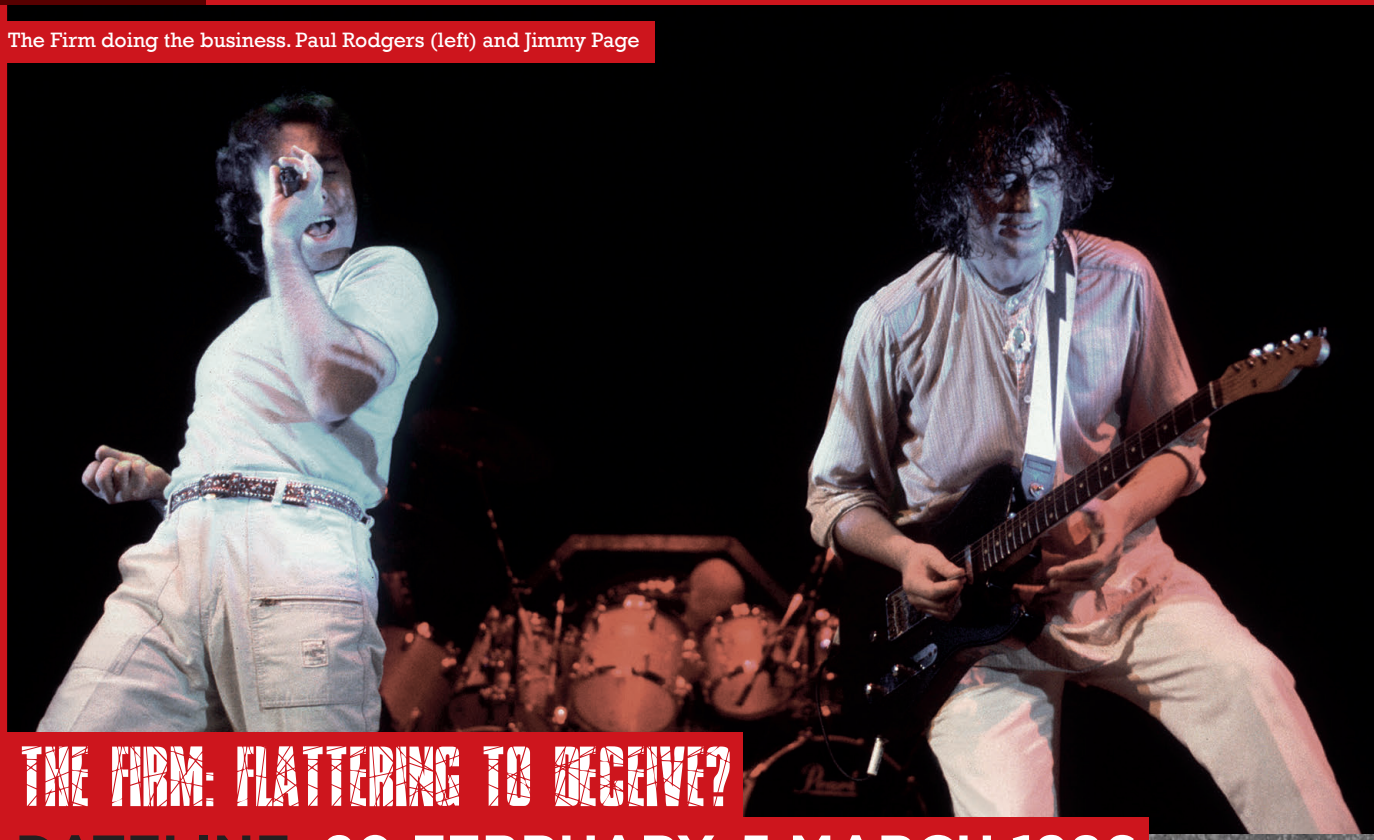
DEREK OLIVER



Richard Page: "I was too invested in what I was doing at that time to join another band."

Photo: Getty Images/Ebet Roberts/Redferns; Getty Images/Walt Disney Television

STEP BACK IN TIME



The Firm doing the business. Paul Rodgers (left) and Jimmy Page

THE FIRM: FLATTERING TO DECEIVE?

DATELINE: 20 FEBRUARY–5 MARCH 1986

MAGAZINE: *KERRANG!*

***KERRANG!* WRITER MICK WALL** was out to right a wrong after being handed The Firm's second album to review. The original announcement of the alliance between Swan Song labelmates Jimmy Page and Paul Rodgers had caused media excitement on a scale only ever reserved for former members of Led Zeppelin, Free and Bad Company. And yet a year earlier, in 1985, Wall had felt distinctly lukewarm about the group's eponymous debut.

"'The Firm'," said the writer, lacked "any genuinely inspired Jimmy Page input," while suggesting that readers should "ignore the noble" pedigree of a band that Wall still hoped would come good on their "second or third album."

Fast forward to 1986's 'Mean Business' and the moment of truth. Retaining the same musical partners as on the first album – fretless bassist Tony Franklin and ex-Manfred Mann/Uriah Heep drummer Chris Slade – and with Page and Rodgers once again sharing the production duties (this time alongside the Australian Julian Mendelsohn), Jimmy and Paul had a tour in support of the first record under their belts. And second time around Wall was much more satisfied.

"I fouled up when I reviewed 'The Firm' a year ago, and I want to redeem myself," he pleaded, adding: "When I think of what I said in my review I feel like a jerk."

NEVERTHELESS, WALL felt he'd made something of a mistake by first playing 'Mean Business' in the metal-worshipping *Kerrang!* office, where "the reaction was drab." Yet after taking 'Mean Business' home with him and listening to it in the bath, Wall insisted that the album revealed hidden depths.

"'Mean Business' could be the side three and side four of 'The Firm', which for me is plenty," he mused. "None of the eight numbers break new ground for the band, their sound is just as convincing and colourful as before and Paul Rodgers, if it can be believed, is in even sweeter voice this time around."

The writer heaped praise on 'Fortune Hunter', 'All The King's Horses', the "swampland boogie" of 'Cadillac' and the Rodgers-sourced 'Live In Peace' that closed side one of the record in "typically anthemic fashion; the slow-burning build-up, the cascading climax, the band all showing muscle." Best of all, according to Wall, it saw Page turn up his amplifier and "cut out a few diamonds with his guitar."

OF COURSE a different version of 'Live In Peace' had already been released three years earlier on Rodgers' solo album, 'Cut Loose'. And in some ways so had the Page/Rodgers-penned 'Free To Live', given that it bore such an uncanny resemblance to Bad Company's 'Live For The Music', a track written by guitarist Mick Ralphs that featured on the 'Run With The Pack' album back in 1976. "I couldn't [even] tell the difference [between the two songs]," acknowledged Mick once the similarity had been pointed out to him. "Maybe I should have stayed home in the bath."

This wasn't the only song on 'Mean Business' that had its roots in previous work, though. Though the credits carried no clue, the album's opening number, 'Fortune Hunter', was co-written by Page and Yes bassist Chris Squire for their aborted XYZ project in 1981.

Whatever the provenance of the material, though, Wall was convinced that there was one major difference between the first and second The Firm albums. "Nobody seems afraid to really let loose this time."

Photos: Getty Images/Paul Natkin

ROCK CANDY SAYS...

MORE THAN THREE DECADES after The Firm bit the dust in 1986, the band is still something of an enigma. Why did the public respond with relative indifference to this particular supergroup? The debut album 'The Firm' scraped into the Top 20 on both sides of the Atlantic, but 'Mean Business' failed to match even that level of commercial success.

Perhaps Page and Rodgers contributed to the 'ho hum' reaction by failing to acknowledge their respective pasts. On tour The Firm played only solo material, songs recorded by The Firm and blues covers. Had they gone out there with all guns blazing, throwing in some of their many catalogue gems, it's entirely possible that The Firm might have made more of a mark.

Jimmy tries to get his head around bassist Tony Franklin's 'interesting' hairstyle

BUSINESS AS USUAL

PLAY LEAD GUITAR

PAGE WOULD later claim that he and Rodgers had always planned to disband The Firm after two albums, but the decision to call a halt within months of 'Mean Business' hitting the racks suggests that its underachievement hastened that decision. Page would go on to release a solo album, 'Outrider', in 1988, while Rodgers hooked up with ex-Faces and The Who drummer Kenney Jones in The Law and put out an album, also called 'The Law', in 1991. Tony Franklin went on to play with David Gilmour, while Slade eventually joined AC/DC.

TIME HAS not been especially kind to The Firm, and in later years Rodgers would explain that the band was "a vehicle to help get Jimmy back on his feet, musically" following the ring-rusty guitarist's Led Zeppelin hangover years.

"By the end I felt that Jimmy was up and running and in great shape again," Paul added. "I thought, 'Job well done' and we left things on a high note – possibly to come back to it at some point. We haven't actually done that, but maybe we will. Who knows?"

SNIPPETS – SHORT, SHARP SHOCKS FROM FEBRUARY-MARCH 1986

VIXEN – AN EARLY SIGHTING

DATELINE: MARCH 1986
MAGAZINE: *METAL FORCES*

Two years before the release of Vixen's eponymous debut album, *Metal Forces* got the scoop on the California-based all-female rockers, whose line-up at the time still included bass player Pia Maiocco. A three-song demo saw Kelv Hellrazer declare them "truly American influenced, more akin to 1994, Storm or Toronto than Girlschool."

PHIL LYNOTT RIP

DATELINE: 23 JANUARY–5 FEBRUARY 1986
MAGAZINE: *KERRANG!*

Mark Putterford, who just weeks earlier had spent time arguing about football with the ex-Thin Lizzy/Grand Slam frontman, penned a moving tribute to the Irishman after Lynott succumbed to drug-related issues at the age of just 36. "When the news came over the radio, it hit me like a punch in the stomach," wrote Mark.

AC/DC 'FLY...' INTO WEMBLEY

DATELINE: 6–19 FEBRUARY 1986
MAGAZINE: *KERRANG!*

Supported by Fastway, AC/DC brought their 'Fly On The Wall' world tour to Wembley Arena. Writer Sylvie Simmons loved it, declaring the experience as something like getting wasted with an old friend: "Ain't likely to be much different after all these years, but you know you're gonna stagger home deaf, dumb and arseholed."

ANTHRAX: "WE'RE THE NEXT BIG THING!"

DATELINE: MARCH 1986
MAGAZINE: *METAL FORCES*

As the New Yorkers prepared for their debut European tour, guitarist Scott Ian voiced high hopes for his group. "I look at us as the next [big] thing," he told Bernard Doe. "In 1981, when Iron Maiden first came to the States, they were different to anything else. Now it's 1986 and we're an underground band, but one that's major."

STEP BACK IN TIME

Icon L-R: Pat Dixon (drums), John Aquilino (guitars), Stephen Clifford (vocals), Dan Wexler (guitars), Tracy Wallach (bass and vocals)

ICON'S 'NIGHT OF THE CRIME': "SHEER BLOODY HEAVEN!"

DATELINE: 6–19 MARCH 1986

MAGAZINE: *KERRANG!*

CRIKEY! IT WAS A rare event indeed when mild-mannered Derek Oliver got hopping mad over music. But his review of the second album by Arizona-based quintet Icon saw him positively foaming at the mouth.

"I'd like to get hold of a flash Kramer guitar from one of those tarty looking prats in poxy bands like Mötley Crüe or RATT," he wrote. "And smash it into a million pieces over their genuinely disturbing grins. Then, after ramming the wangbar down their throats sideways, I'd poke a copy of 'Night Of The Crime' into their grubby mitts, telling them to get acquainted with its contents, like quickly." According to Mr Oliver, all this radical action would be the best way to make other groups understand that Icon were very much the real deal.

PRODUCED BY Eddie Kramer and mixed by Ron Nevison, 'Night Of The Crime' represented a major step up from Icon's primitive, Mike Varney-helmed, eponymous 1984 debut that had also been released on Capitol Records.

"Icon is the moniker and freshness is the message," Derek purred, praising the band's "mangled riffs and serious pouts" and observing that "tradition is being blown sky-high with the meanest set of rhythms I've heard in some considerable time – since the last Keel LP [the Gene Simmons-produced 'The Right To Rock'], I believe. 'Strength', 'intelligence', 'substance', 'perfection' and 'sturdiness' – these are just a few of the adjectives that flow when trying to describe the power inherent in this LP," he continued, now with the bit between his teeth.

Oliver felt that with the help of Bob Halligan Jr, the songwriting hitmaker associated with Kiss and Blue Öyster Cult who chipped in on six of the 10 tracks here, Icon really had hit pay dirt as regards consistent songwriting. Best of all, though, was the performance of lead singer Stephen Clifford, hailed as "the greatest voice yet discovered; mature, comfortably stunning and extremely convincing as he shouts and leers around the edge of brilliant virtuosity."

THESE COMMENTS were not intended to denigrate the other four group members, though. "The rest of the band are equally talented," Derek added. "Each member stretches themselves to the max, achieving a tightness that is simply outrageous. Loud guitars are well up front, delivering the catchiest of riffs, and the drum sound is excellent... Heaven, sheer bloody heaven!"

The bad news arrived in a postscript to the review. By the time 'Night Of The Crime' made it into the racks Stephen Clifford had already decided to quit. And pretty much by the time the listener had taken the record out of its shrink-wrap cellophane, Icon had already been dropped by Capitol.

"Just when I thought I'd found the perfect beast..." fumed Derek...

Photos: Julia Goode

ROCK CANDY SAYS...

HAVING MET AS SCHOOL friends in a group called – wait for it - The Schoolboys, we can only imagine the crushing disappointment felt by the other band members when singer Stephen Clifford told them at a video shoot that he was throwing in the towel after finding God.

And yet somehow Icon pressed on, finding a new frontman called Steven Young, who was in turn replaced by Jerry Harrison for 1987's 'A More Perfect Union', initially available on cassette only.

Icon guitarist John Aquilino and vocalist Stephen Clifford. "Mangled riffs and serious pouts."

NEARLY TWO more years would pass before Icon resurfaced on Megaforce Records with 1989's 'Right Between The Eyes', an album produced by guitarist Dan Wexler and featuring fellow Arizonan Alice Cooper on two tracks. Here in the UK we even got to see Icon on a support tour with Megaforce labelmates King's X.

Despite being a creditable effort, 'Right Between The Eyes' was no 'Night Of The Crime', and although the video for 'Taking My Breath Away' got some screen time on MTV, Icon broke up in 1990. Then in 2008 three original members – guitarists Wexler and John Aquilino and drummer Pat Dixon – revived the band. Several singers came and went before, incredibly, Stephen Clifford returned to the fold in 2010.

'NIGHT OF The Crime' still scrubs up remarkably well in 2019. It's hard to name many other albums capable of matching its balance of metal and melody. No wonder 'NOTC' was only narrowly beaten by Journey's 'Escape' and Michael Bolton's 'Everybody's Crazy' when it was voted the third best AOR album of all time by readers of *Kerrang!* back in 1988.

SNIPPETS – SHORT, SHARP SHOCKS FROM FEBRUARY-MARCH 1986

JOHNNY ROTTEN DIGS VAN HALEN

DATELINE: 20 FEBRUARY–5 MARCH 1986
MAGAZINE: *KERRANG!*

During an interview to promote his post-Sex Pistols band Public Image Ltd, John Lydon surprisingly 'outed' himself as an admirer of Van Halen. "I like them lots, and that drives people up the wall but it's an honest statement," he admitted. "I've thought for years that, aside from image, there's very little difference between punk and heavy metal."

IRON MAIDEN SCOOP K! READERS POLL

DATELINE: 20 FEBRUARY–5 MARCH 1986
MAGAZINE: *KERRANG!*

As if we needed reminding of Maiden's astonishing popularity during the 1980s, the group won eight categories in *Kerrang!*'s reader-voted poll for 1985, including Best Band, Best Album, Best Video and Album Cover ('Live After Death'), Best Single (the live version of 'Running Free') and Best Singer, Bassist and Drummer. Worst group of the year was Venom.

'MASTER OF PUPPETS' RECEIVES THE FULL 5KS

DATELINE: 6–19 MARCH 1986
MAGAZINE: *KERRANG!*

At a time when the jury was still out on thrash metal, Metallica's make-or-break third record received a ringing endorsement from Mick Wall of *Kerrang!*, who hailed it as "their finest album to date." "If you're into heavy metal, and God knows you'd better be, then 'Master Of Puppets' is most definitely the album for you," he wrote.

PERSON OF INTEREST

ROCK CANDY SALUTES THE ROCK STARS WHO DID THINGS DIFFERENTLY...

ZODIAC MINDWARP

FORTUNATELY – OR POSSIBLY UNFORTUNATELY – there's only one man in rock'n'roll's long list of debauched performers who's written and sung *"Sex führer baby I'm a love dictator/Blitzkrieg romance I'm a living detonator."* And as far as we know, there's also only one man out there who's ever written a book called *Get Your C*ck Out*. That man, in case you're interested, goes by the unlikely name of Zodiac Mindwarp. Zed to his friends. Or perhaps even Mark.

MARK MANNING is the man behind, in front of and to the side of the Zodiac Mindwarp character. He was born in Armley, near Leeds in the north of England, not a place to encourage his dreams and aspirations based around sex, drugs and rock'n'roll.

Manning moved to London and in the early '80s could be found biding his time working as a graphic designer for a UK music mag called *Flexipop!* He then moved on to a job at *Metal Fury*, 'Britain's Heaviest Poster Magazine', but by 1985 had decided to go for the full rock star routine himself. Manning came up with the Zodiac Mindwarp alter ego, taking the name from an underground comic book that had been published in the late '60s. He formed a band with a pal called Jimmy Cauty playing guitar and called it The Love Reaction

He nicked that name from a line in the Bruce Springsteen song, 'Dancing In The Dark'. Being a visual kinda guy, Zodiac was particularly image-conscious. Being a bit bonkers, he decided to pitch the group's look somewhere between army-uniformed sci-fi warriors from the 23rd century and a Motörhead roadie. Nobody had previously come up with the idea of a Sex Führer leading a rock band, but everyone was convinced that Zodiac Mindwarp definitely looked like one.

CAUTY DIDN'T last too long, and would eventually find fame with both The Orb and KLF. But with new members in tow bearing preposterous names, Zodiac Mindwarp And The Love Reaction suddenly became all the rage in London, featuring on the covers of various national music papers. The band signed to a subsidiary of Phonogram called Food and scored a UK Top 20 hit with the insistent 'Prime Mover' in 1987.

The band's music was big, it was heavy and it was anthemic. The lyrics were deliberately lurid, more often than not discussing sex. And yet there was always something tremendously tongue-in-cheek about the whole affair. These boys definitely weren't products of the LA Sunset Strip, and while they certainly wouldn't pass a 2019 political correctness test, Zodiac's words were both brilliantly dumb and stupidly clever, part celebration, part send-up.

"Well I'm Christ in shades I'm a Napalm God/Your lipstick flickers round my lightning rod/You fever pitch bitch you love to tease/Well I'm a hot dog daddy up on your knees."

Tongue-in-cheek metal at its absolute best, 'Prime Mover' was nevertheless such a rocker that Zodiac Mindwarp And The Love Reaction quickly became Mötley Crüe's favourite band. The story goes that the LA dudes even restyled themselves to look like Zodiac on their 1987 album 'Girls Girls Girls', perhaps taking seriously what was never meant to be serious.

ZODIAC WAS an incredible and original creation, rock'n'roll as a kind of play-within-a-play, with a band featuring a revolving door of players with ever more ridiculous names. Examples? Well how about Cobalt Stargazer, The Apocalypse, Kid Chaos, Boom Boom Kaboomski, Slam Thunderhide, Trash D Garbage, Flash Bastard, Suzi X, Tex Diablo, Robbie Vomm and Kev Reverb? Oh, and who could forget Jack Shitt?!

In truth The Love Reaction's profile was far greater than the band's volume of sales. The debut album, 1988's 'Tattooed Beat Messiah', hit number 20 in the UK, but only made it to number 132 on the US *Billboard* charts. Never mind. It was still Zodiac's greatest gift to the world and it both made and cemented his legend amongst those of us rock fans with an unbridled love for the daft and the defiant.

Later, the band toured with Alice Cooper, and Vincent Furnier was so taken with what he saw and heard that he recorded a cover of Zodiac's 'Feed My Frankenstein', which ended up in the *Wayne's World* movie. Guns N' Roses and Iron Maiden took the band out as well, but nothing much came of it and Zodiac Mindwarp And The Love Reaction ended up being dropped by their label. Mindwarp and his mob had been so over-the-top from the start that there was nowhere left to go after that extraordinary first record. In many ways it was the beginning, the middle and the end of their story.

The second album, 'Hoodlum Thunder', was released in 1992 to little public interest, and the same fate befell 1994's 'One More Knife' too. Various other recordings have emerged since, but Zodiac Mindwarp really was a one-time deal.

MARK MANNING hasn't been completely idle, though, turning his hand to writing such exciting tomes as *F*cked By Rock: The Unspeakable Confessions of Zodiac Mindwarp*, a work purportedly documenting his debauched lifestyle choices. Whether this material is true is open to interpretation, of course. There is a distinct possibility that it's all part of the general Zodiac 'mind warp', blending fact and fiction into fantasy, much as the band did in their heyday.

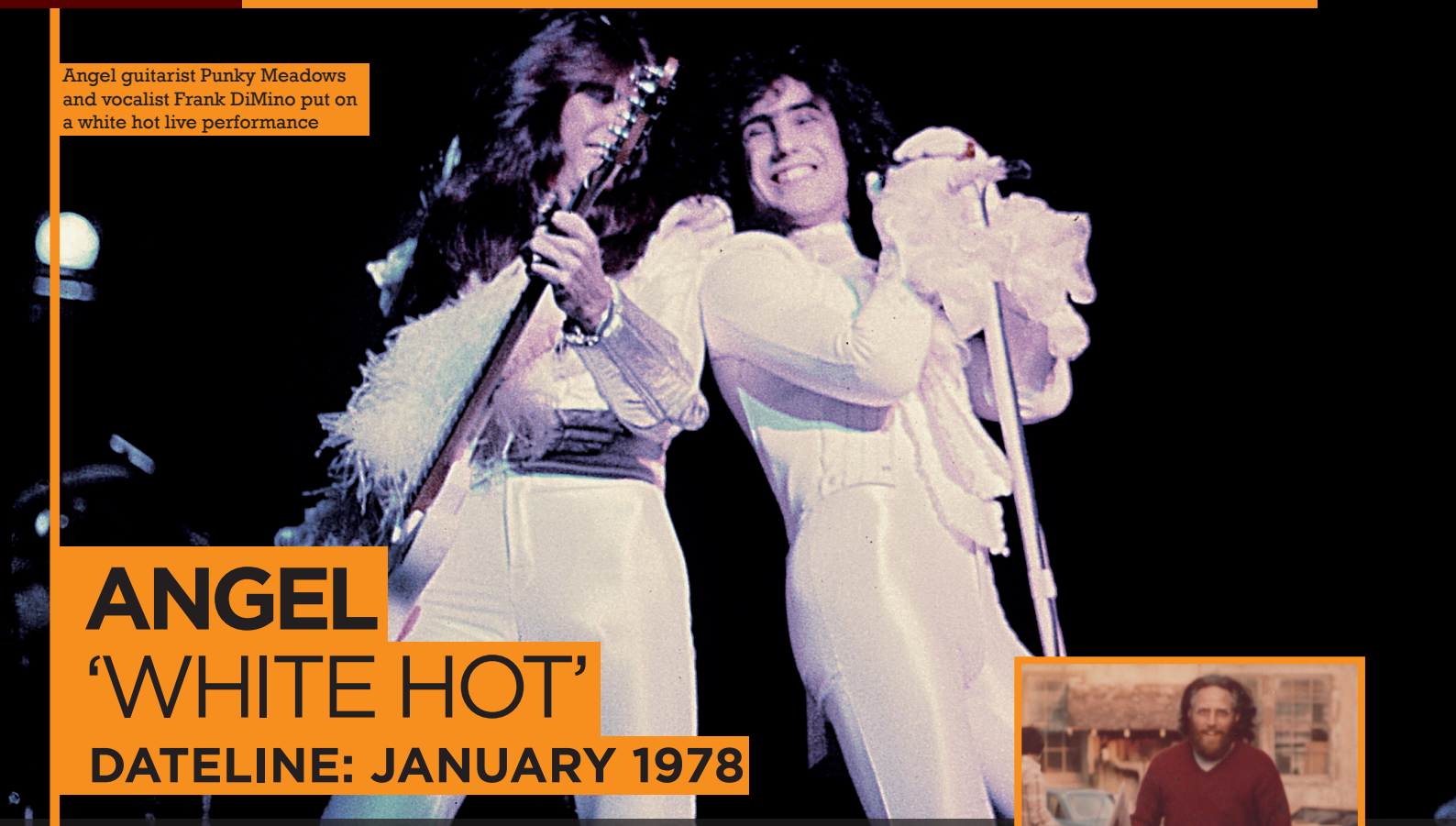
Zodiac Mindwarp And The Love Reaction's last album, 'We Are Volsung', appeared way back in 2010, which suggests that Mark Manning isn't in any rush to unleash new music on the world..

"The music industry is dead," he has claimed. "It's dead. It's just kicking a bit. Wriggling on its back."

Hard as it might be to believe, the self-styled Sex Führer is now in middle age and in recent times gained some low-level notoriety writing for bi-monthly magazine *The Idler*, a publication dedicated to the idea that your play should be your work. Who knows, though? Maybe Zodiac Mindwarp is just waiting in the wings, picking his musical moment when once again he will move amongst us as a Christ in Shades.

Words: John Nicholson. Photo: Getty Images/Fin Costello/Redferns

CLASSIC ALBUM SLEEVE



Angel guitarist Punky Meadows and vocalist Frank DiMino put on a white hot live performance

ANGEL 'WHITE HOT'

DATELINE: JANUARY 1978

Artist **David McMacken** gives us the inside story on how he created the striking painting for the cover of Angel's 1978 album 'White Hot'.

"ALTHOUGH I'D ALREADY PAINTED a few album covers, I really got my big music business break thanks to Frank Zappa. I ran into him in LA back in 1971 when he was doing post-production for his *200 Motels* film project. Somehow I managed to get the job working on the poster and cover art. From there I went on to work for Frank on the 'Over-Nite Sensation' album, then on album covers for the likes of Flo & Eddie, Steve Marriott and Cat Stevens. I guess the most rock cover I did during that period was for the Kansas album 'Leftoverture' in 1976.

"I was first commissioned to work for Angel in 1977 by a graphic design company called Gribbitt. I knew a guy who worked there called Rick Covell. The previous year they'd commissioned me to paint a cover for an album called 'Homebrew' by a Canadian band called Starwood. They came back to me for Angel.

"The brief for the Angel album was quite specific. I was told the painting should depict the time of the French Revolution [1789], and that image should show the band being burnt at the stake in front of the Notre Dame cathedral in Paris, in the middle of a rioting mob. The album was originally titled 'Red Hot', but the way the painting came out led to it being changed to 'White Hot'.

"I wasn't familiar with Angel at the time, but that was the case for much of the stuff I worked on back then. I got a cassette of the band's music and a bunch of photos for reference, but they didn't ever pose for me. I spoke to guitarist Punky Meadows a few times, though. That might have been because he also had a connection with Zappa. Frank had written a fairly tongue-in cheek song about him called 'Punky's Whips' not too long before then.

"I DON'T remember how long I had to paint the piece, but looking at the finished artwork now I can tell that I wasn't nurturing it for days on end. Some of it still looks sketchy. I suspect I would've had a couple of weeks to deliver, maybe a month. That was the norm back then.

"I used an airbrush for the majority of the piece to create the mood of doom and gloom. I did some of the facial details in the mob and the architecture with detailed hand work, and used that technique with even greater attention to detail for the five band members' faces. I did the front cover painting first, then the back.

"OVERALL, THIS was quite a challenging job, given that there was a lot of detail required for the mob. Getting the sense of burning heat in the centre of the piece wasn't easy either. Physically it was a pretty big painting, because the original idea was that the album would come in a gatefold sleeve. But I understand it was only ever released in that format in Japan. I don't remember having to redo anything after I'd submitted it – everyone involved seemed very pleased with it. Sadly, though, I don't know what happened to the original painting.

"I was pretty happy with what I did and still am today to be honest. The band already had a really strong look so I was aware that I had to come up with something spectacular. I'd like to think I managed to pull it off. 'Red Hot' would've been a cool title, but 'White Hot' just has the edge, don't you think?"

Check out David's work at www.ratzandcompany.com, *where you can also purchase his work.*

Interview by Dave Reynolds. Main photo: Rich Galbraith

"There is a kind of apocalyptic look there, but the use of reds, blacks and browns were in a certain way an effective means of focusing the eye on that white hot energy. But as it was a tight deadline, I could also get going faster by being able to 'block in' the figures in the mob. It definitely gave the overall painting a denser feel, but to be honest it was really a means of quickening things up."

"The brief I received definitely said that the band's winged head logo had to be included in the painting. To be honest, until I looked at the cover again I'd forgotten that it features as part of the cathedral's stonemasonry. I think it works well and looks like it actually belongs there."

"I was told that the cathedral had to be based on Notre Dame in Paris, so I had to do some proper research there. If I was doing the painting today I could just go to Google and search for old [pre-fire] photographs of the cathedral. Easy! But back then it was a question of going to the library or looking in old copies of *National Geographic* magazine to find reference material."

"I only had record company promo shots of the band members to refer to, so a good friend of mine, Richard Blair, agreed to be tied up and then pose for me, so I could get a good idea of how each member would look at the stake. Richard was so thin that his ribs and pecs bulged out, so that's why each band member has the same body shape in the painting. I only had one life model for all five musicians! I drew the band members' heads onto tissue paper and then traced them on to the artwork. I'm fascinated by the fact that the heads all look slightly detached from the bodies. That's possibly because I draw a little bit weird. I lean left in my drawings!"

"I was living in a little hamlet between Pasadena and LA called Eagle Rock at the time I was working on the painting. To help me get something to refer to as I was painting the mob, I got my friend Richard Blair to have a kind of mock fight with my neighbours. I had a photographer capture everything on film, and that really helped me paint that angry violence."

"The original intention with the heat source was that it should be flames from a fire, but the more I worked on the painting the more it didn't seem to fit to have any smokiness or blackness. I think that was most likely down to the technique I was using. The technique often dictates the solution, incidentally. I was doing this painting at the tail end of my airbrushing days and flames are always much better hand-painted. Using an airbrush meant that the heat element started to look more like some sort of energy source consuming the band, some kind of weird white heat. And that's where the whole 'White Hot' idea came from."

ANGEL – 'WHITE HOT'

Released: 3 January 1978. Album length: 35.37. Produced by Eddie Leonetti. Engineered by Lee DeCarlo. Assisted by Rick Smith. Recorded at The Record Plant, Los Angeles.

1. Don't Leave Me Lonely *(3.56) – Barry Brandt/Frank DiMino*
2. Ain't Gonna Eat Out My Heart Anymore *(2.44) – Pam Sawyer/Lori Burton*
3. Hold Me, Squeeze Me (3:48) *– Punky Meadows/Gregg Giuffria/Frank DiMino*
4. Over And Over (3:59) *– Punky Meadows/Gregg Giuffria/Frank DiMino*
5. Under Suspicion (4:40) *– Punky Meadows/Gregg Giuffria/Frank DiMino/ Felix Robinson/Barry Brandt*
6. Got Love If You Want It (4:23) *– Punky Meadows/Gregg Giuffria/Frank DiMino*
7. Stick Like Glue (2:38) *– Punky Meadows/ Gregg Giuffria/Frank DiMino*
8. Flying With Broken Wings (Without You) *(3.32) – Punky Meadows/Gregg Giuffria/Frank DiMino*
9. You Could Lose Me (*4.56) – Punky Meadows/Gregg Giuffria/Frank DiMino*
10. The Winter Song (3.46) *– Punky Meadows/Gregg Giuffria/Frank DiMino*

LINE UP:
Frank DiMino – lead vocals
Punky Meadows – lead guitars
Felix Robinson – bass guitar
Barry Brandt – drums and percussion
Gregg Giuffria – keyboards, Moog, IIIc synthesizer

YOU COULDN'T MAKE IT UP!

INSANE TALES FROM THE ANNALS OF ROCK

"Is that real blood you're dribbling Gene?"

DATELINE: FEBRUARY 1977

KISS USE THEIR OWN BLOOD AS INK IN A MARVEL COMIC... OR DO THEY?!

WHEN **KISS** BESTRODE THE WORLD IN THEIR MIGHTY STACK HEELS BACK IN THE LATE '70S, THE BAND'S MANAGER BILL AUCOIN WAS ALWAYS ON THE HUNT FOR CRAZY MERCHANDISING AND PR OPPORTUNITIES. SO WHEN MARVEL COMICS DEMANDED BLOOD FROM THE BAND TO INK A KISS SPECIAL, AUCOIN WAS ONLY TOO HAPPY TO OBLIGE...

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO OVERESTIMATE the importance of Kiss in the evolution of rock as a commercial enterprise. At a time when the music industry was expanding at a rate of knots, and inexperienced outsiders were simply making it up as they went along, the New York four-piece was perhaps the first group to truly see the financial possibilities for this new, stadium-sized art form. So as Kiss became an amped-up modern day equivalent of a vintage travelling circus, the band's powerful image unlocked the door to the wonders of merchandising and brand extensions, where fans would *pay them* to help advertise their product.

In late '70s America there was almost no area that Kiss didn't explore as a potential cash cow, from Kiss dolls to Kiss pinball machines and all points in-between. So when Marvel Comics – one of the States' most powerful youth brands in its own right – came calling, it was no surprise that the band and their hugely savvy manager Bill Aucoin were all ears. The band first featured in Marvel's *Howard The Duck* comic issues 12 and 13 in May and June of 1977.

Words by Malcolm Dome. Cartoon by Christophe Sénégas.
Photo: Getty Images/Michael Ochs Archives

"We were always looking for new ways to exploit the band's image," Aucoin explained to me back in 2002. "And it was a logical step to have them star in their own comic. After all, they had a real superhero look about them. So we did a deal with Marvel, who immediately saw the potential of having them at the centre of their own comic."

AUCOIN KNEW that a Kiss comic was a marketing man's dream but, always on the lookout for something that little bit more extraordinary, he came up with another PR stunt to squeeze yet more press column inches out of the stunt.

"I came up with this idea of having the four members each have some of their own blood mixed in with the ink that would be used to print the Kiss mag," he said. "And yes, it *was* a publicity stunt. But like everything we did back then, it had never been done by any band before, and it guaranteed we'd get a lot of attention."

You would have thought that the four band members would have been delighted by this daft publicity stunt. Apparently not, though...

"Gene Simmons and Paul Stanley were both concerned about it," admitted Aucoin. "I had to really talk them around. Ace Frehley and Peter Criss fully embraced the concept, but Gene and Paul were nervous. Even though I told them that we'd definitely have a fully trained nurse on hand to take the blood, they were still not at all happy. On the day itself the pair of them almost pulled out. Thankfully, though, they did it in the end, and nothing went wrong. We took a syringe full of blood from all of the band members."

IN A (presumably) tongue-in-cheek attempt to make the whole affair look terribly official, a legal document was drawn up and was then duly signed by the band and sent to media outlets when the mag went to print. It stated...

"This is to certify that Kiss members Gene Simmons, Ace Frehley, Paul Stanley and Peter Criss have each donated blood which is being collectively mixed with the red ink to be used for the first issue of the Marvel/ Kiss comic. The blood was extracted on 21 February 1977 at Nassau Coliseum and has been under guarded refrigeration until this day when it was delivered in an armored truck to the Borden Ink plant in Depew, New York."

A Marvel Comics Super Special!: Kiss didn't actually appear until September of that year. But when the comic finally came out, any rabid Kiss fan thinking he or she had at least the tiniest amount of a band member's blood in the mag's ink would have been sorely mistaken, even though the cover stated: "Printed in *real* Kiss blood". Despite the fact that the blood really *was* poured into a vat of red ink at the plant, it was never actually used in the printing of the Kiss comic.

"That's true," laughed Aucoin. "The problem is that the ink at the plant was constantly being used to print all sorts of magazines, so there was no way of guaranteeing the blood would end up in the Kiss comic. As it turned out, what actually happened was that the blood was used in an edition of *Sports Illustrated* that was printed a few days before the comic. So anyone who has a copy of *Sports Illustrated* from September '77 actually owns a drop or two of Kiss blood!"

EVEN THOUGH the blood proved to be a no show in the Kiss comic, the work itself was still very impressive. The 40-pager was written by Steve Gerber, the man who'd created the iconic *Howard The Duck* comic. Gerber invented a plot line where the band battled established Marvel super-villains Mephisto and Doctor Doom and the Kiss fans lapped it up. So much so that Kiss returned for a further dedicated Marvel mag, in 1978, this time in a more occult-oriented adventure.

"Does it matter whether or not Kiss blood was actually used to print the Marvel comic?" asked Aucoin, before answering his own question. "No it does not. The truth is the band *did* donate their own blood, and their blood *did* end up on printed pages. The fact that it wasn't in the right publication is irrelevant. Mind you, I knew at the time what had happened, but I never told the band. I'm not sure they'd have seen the funny side of it, especially Gene and Paul. If they'd found out, then I can imagine they might have been out for *my* blood!"

GUYS- THE PRE-ORDERS FOR THE COMICS ARE AMAZING! WE JUST NEED ANOTHER 50 PINTS OF BLOOD AND WE'RE FINISHED...
KISS BLOOD
KISS BLOOD
KISS BLOOD
C·SÉNÉGAS

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

BIZARRE MEETINGS WITH BIZARRE ROCK STARS...

Def Leppard drummer Rick Allen (second from right) standing next to the man who wound him up beautifully, Steve Clark (far right)

When the Leps drummer decided to don a disguise to go for a pre-gig walkabout with writer *Paul Elliott* in a packed Coliseum in Phoenix back in 1987, little did he know that one of his bandmates was about to play a brilliant trick on him...

IT WAS AN HOUR before showtime, and Def Leppard drummer Rick Allen was in the mood for a little fun. On 19 November 1987, five months into the hugely successful Hysteria tour, Leppard were at the Arizona Veterans Memorial Coliseum in Phoenix, and I was on the road with them to write a cover story for UK music paper *Sounds*.

In the band's dressing room, Rick had been telling me all about the custom-made, electronically enhanced drum kit that had enabled him to carry on playing in the band following the loss of his left arm in a car accident on New Year's Eve 1984. "It's amazing what you can do with three limbs," he laughed. Then he asked if I fancied a walk around the auditorium with him. "You can't do that," I said. "You'll get mobbed." He smiled, shook his head, and walked over to a flight case, from which he pulled out a baseball cap with a wig attached, a pair of thick-rimmed glasses and, best of all, a bomber jacket with one stuffed sleeve.

Once Rick's disguise was complete, the band's guitarist, Steve Clark, came over for a chat, patted Rick on the back, then turned to me with a conspiratorial wink. It was only as Rick led me out of the dressing room that I saw the sheet of paper Steve had surreptitiously stuck on the back of Rick's jacket. Written in large type it said, 'I AM RICK ALLEN FROM DEF LEPPARD!'

DURING OUR walkabout Rick talked to me about how he liked to get in among the people before a show, to get a sense of the atmosphere and to feel a connection with the audience. We watched a little of the support act Tesla, a great band breaking through with their debut album, 'Mechanical Resonance'. I also let Rick walk ahead of me from time to time, just to see the reaction of the fans when they saw the sign stuck to his back. Many laughed, but to my surprise nobody dared to approach the rock star in their midst. I suppose they must have thought the idea of a member of Def Leppard actually wandering around the hall before his show was so far-fetched as to be frankly impossible. And the disguise was very convincing, the false arm and hand most of all. It was only when we returned to the dressing room that Rick finally became aware of the trick his bandmate Clarkey had played on him. Rick gave the only appropriate response. "You w*nker Clark!"

THERE WERE many other memorable moments during the week I spent with the band on that first US leg of the Hysteria tour. I saw three shows, with the band infamously performing 'in the round'. En route from San Diego to LA, when the SUV carrying the Leps stopped on a freeway for the guys to take a leak at the side of the road, two cars pulled up filled with Leppard fans. They jumped out to meet their heroes while they were still in mid-stream. Not a good look. I then interviewed singer Joe Elliott in LA at the Sunset Marquis hotel, both of us sitting poolside in our standard-issue '80s budgie smugglers. When *Jaws* star Roy Scheider jumped in the pool, Joe couldn't help himself and shouted, "Get out of the water!" From the pained look on Scheider's face you could tell he'd heard that gag a million times. But a better joke by far? That was definitely Steve Clark and his 'I AM RICK ALLEN FROM DEF LEPPARD' sign!

Photo: Getty Images/Jeff Kravitz/FilmMagic

MY FIRST GIG

DATELINE: JULY 1973, KING'S LYNN, ENGLAND

No wonder Steve Overland was "transfixed" by Wizzard frontman Roy Wood

"TOTALLY OVERWHELMING!"

FM FRONTMAN **STEVE OVERLAND** TRANSPORTS US BACK TO HIS FIRST EVER JAW-DROPPING GIG WITNESSING GLAM ROCKERS **WIZZARD** IN HIS HOMETOWN…

"I WAS 13 WHEN I went to my first gig, which was the glam rock band Wizzard. I'd bought their hit single 'See My Baby Jive' when it first came out in April 1973, and I immediately loved it. I used to steal records from my older brother Chris to listen to as a rule. But from the very first time I heard this Wizzard tune I was hooked. I went down to my local independent record shop in King's Lynn where I lived and gladly handed over cash to own it. Who knows? Maybe I played a very small role in helping the song get to the top of the UK charts!

"Not long afterwards Wizzard announced a tour, and I noticed that they were coming to King's Lynn to play at a venue called The Corn Exchange. I really wanted to go, so I nagged my brother to take me, but he wasn't at all interested. At that time he wore an Afghan coat and was a big fan of acts like Roy Harper and Man, progressive rock stuff. To him Wizzard was just a pop band. They'd had a number one single and as far as Chris was concerned, that meant they just weren't cool.

"I MUST have had good powers of persuasion, though, because in the end he did take me along to the show. I was totally thrilled about getting the chance to see Wizzard in the flesh. The whole idea of it seemed completely unreal. I had no expectations at all about what was going to happen, but I definitely remember being over-excited with anticipation.

"The gig itself was totally overwhelming. In those days the Corn Exchange was a standing venue. Nowadays it's a lot more upmarket – it even has seats! But back then everyone was squashed together. And Wizzard were a big noise at the time, so the place was packed.

"MY BROTHER and I stood in the middle of the venue, and when the band finally came on I was so gobsmacked I couldn't say a word. I'm not sure that I said anything at all throughout the entire gig. Chris disappeared a couple of times to go to the bar, but I never moved an inch, because I didn't want to miss a thing!

"Because I was a recent convert to the band I only knew the one song that I'd bought as a 45, 'See My Baby Jive'. I don't have any recollection of having paid any attention to the B-side. I kept thinking to myself, 'When are they going to play it? When are they going to play it?' I had no clue back then that bands saved their big hit for the end of the set!

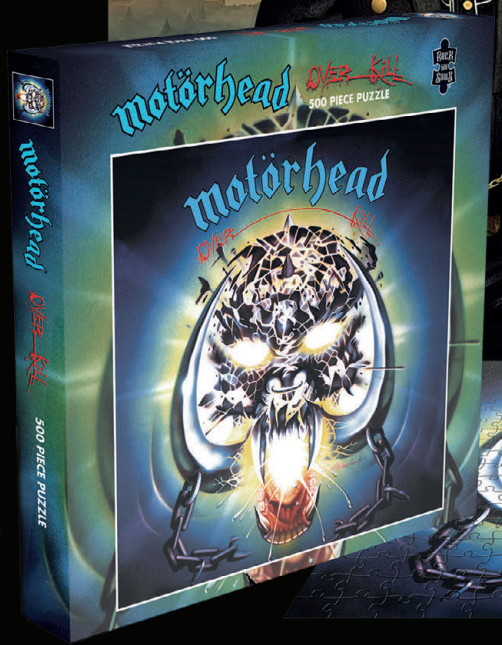
"I WAS transfixed by Wizzard's frontman Roy Wood. He was a really flamboyant and charismatic character, and seeing him in person onstage that night really made me want to be in a band myself. Fortunately I was able to achieve my goal.

"I was really lucky to grow up in an era when so many big bands would play a relatively small place like King's Lynn. Can you imagine an act with a number one single bothering to play a venue like The Corn Exchange these days? That Wizzard show has stayed in my mind ever since. It had a huge impact on me, and that's why I have Roy Wood to blame for turning me into a professional musician!"

Interview by Malcolm Dome. Photos: Getty Images/David Warner Ellis/Redferns; IconicPix/Ray Palmer Archive

MULTIPLE MOTÖRHEAD MERCH

HAS THERE EVER BEEN A MORE MARKETABLE BAND BRAND? HERE ARE SOME FINE EXAMPLES OF THE WIDE, WIDE WORLD OF MOTÖRHEAD...



DUNLOP STRINGS
bass STAINLESS STEEL
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Where is Lemmy?
POP! ROCKS
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LEMMY KILMISTER
VINYL FIGURE / FIGURINE EN VINYLE
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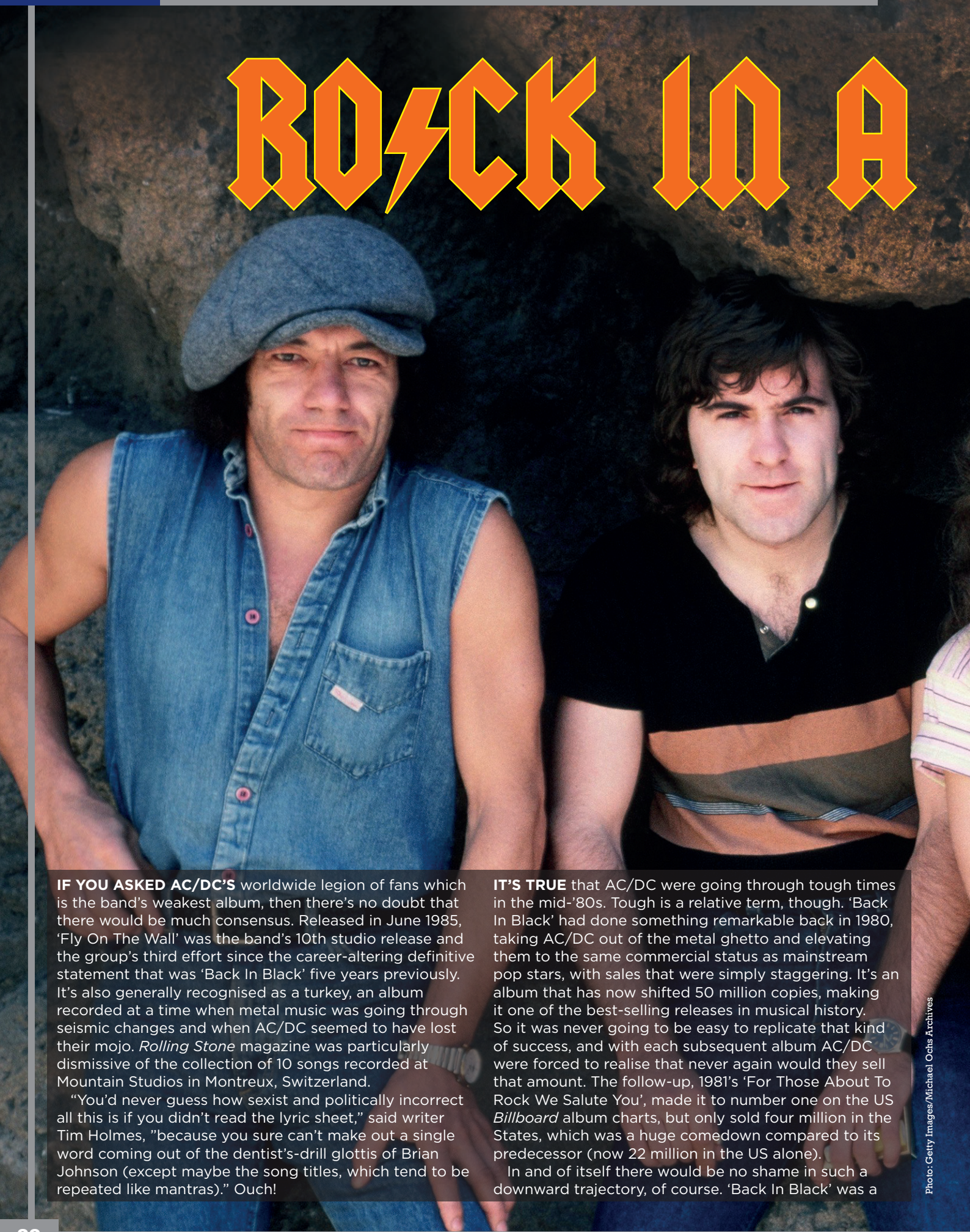


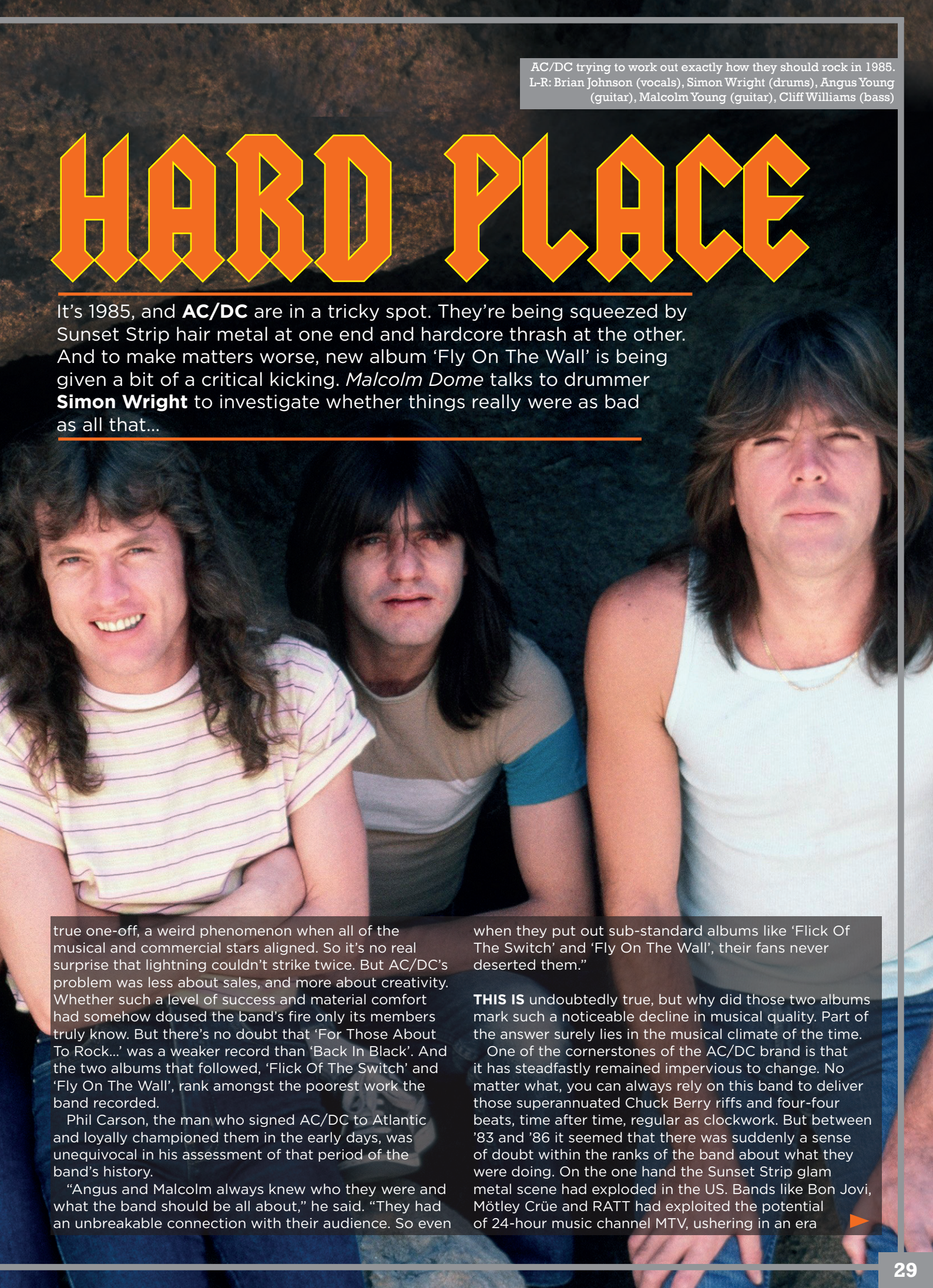
IF YOU ASKED AC/DC'S worldwide legion of fans which is the band's weakest album, then there's no doubt that there would be much consensus. Released in June 1985, 'Fly On The Wall' was the band's 10th studio release and the group's third effort since the career-altering definitive statement that was 'Back In Black' five years previously. It's also generally recognised as a turkey, an album recorded at a time when metal music was going through seismic changes and when AC/DC seemed to have lost their mojo. *Rolling Stone* magazine was particularly dismissive of the collection of 10 songs recorded at Mountain Studios in Montreux, Switzerland.

"You'd never guess how sexist and politically incorrect all this is if you didn't read the lyric sheet," said writer Tim Holmes, "because you sure can't make out a single word coming out of the dentist's-drill glottis of Brian Johnson (except maybe the song titles, which tend to be repeated like mantras)." Ouch!

IT'S TRUE that AC/DC were going through tough times in the mid-'80s. Tough is a relative term, though. 'Back In Black' had done something remarkable back in 1980, taking AC/DC out of the metal ghetto and elevating them to the same commercial status as mainstream pop stars, with sales that were simply staggering. It's an album that has now shifted 50 million copies, making it one of the best-selling releases in musical history. So it was never going to be easy to replicate that kind of success, and with each subsequent album AC/DC were forced to realise that never again would they sell that amount. The follow-up, 1981's 'For Those About To Rock We Salute You', made it to number one on the US *Billboard* album charts, but only sold four million in the States, which was a huge comedown compared to its predecessor (now 22 million in the US alone).

In and of itself there would be no shame in such a downward trajectory, of course. 'Back In Black' was a

Photo: Getty Images/Michael Ochs Archives



AC/DC trying to work out exactly how they should rock in 1985. L-R: Brian Johnson (vocals), Simon Wright (drums), Angus Young (guitar), Malcolm Young (guitar), Cliff Williams (bass)

HARD PLACE

It's 1985, and **AC/DC** are in a tricky spot. They're being squeezed by Sunset Strip hair metal at one end and hardcore thrash at the other. And to make matters worse, new album 'Fly On The Wall' is being given a bit of a critical kicking. *Malcolm Dome* talks to drummer **Simon Wright** to investigate whether things really were as bad as all that...

true one-off, a weird phenomenon when all of the musical and commercial stars aligned. So it's no real surprise that lightning couldn't strike twice. But AC/DC's problem was less about sales, and more about creativity. Whether such a level of success and material comfort had somehow doused the band's fire only its members truly know. But there's no doubt that 'For Those About To Rock...' was a weaker record than 'Back In Black'. And the two albums that followed, 'Flick Of The Switch' and 'Fly On The Wall', rank amongst the poorest work the band recorded.

Phil Carson, the man who signed AC/DC to Atlantic and loyally championed them in the early days, was unequivocal in his assessment of that period of the band's history.

"Angus and Malcolm always knew who they were and what the band should be all about," he said. "They had an unbreakable connection with their audience. So even when they put out sub-standard albums like 'Flick Of The Switch' and 'Fly On The Wall', their fans never deserted them."

THIS IS undoubtedly true, but why did those two albums mark such a noticeable decline in musical quality. Part of the answer surely lies in the musical climate of the time.

One of the cornerstones of the AC/DC brand is that it has steadfastly remained impervious to change. No matter what, you can always rely on this band to deliver those superannuated Chuck Berry riffs and four-four beats, time after time, regular as clockwork. But between '83 and '86 it seemed that there was suddenly a sense of doubt within the ranks of the band about what they were doing. On the one hand the Sunset Strip glam metal scene had exploded in the US. Bands like Bon Jovi, Mötley Crüe and RATT had exploited the potential of 24-hour music channel MTV, ushering in an era

DARK DAYS

where a striking visual proposition was paramount. At the other end of the scale a new breed of metal bands including Metallica, Anthrax and Megadeth had rejected traditional norms and were creating fast and uncompromising music that pushed the envelope of what would be considered extreme. Suddenly AC/DC found themselves in the squeezed middle. Their look wasn't commercial enough for MTV, their sound wasn't wild enough for thrashers. And when 'Flick Of The Switch' was released in 1983, for the first time you could hear real doubt in the grooves.

It didn't help that AC/DC were also having personnel issues when recording 'Flick Of The Switch'. The relationship between Malcolm Young and drummer Phil Rudd had been deteriorating for some time, mainly due to Rudd's drug and alcohol problems. In some ways this would prove to be ironic, given the fact that Malcolm would be forced to take time out in 1988 to address some of his own addiction issues. But nevertheless, tensions between the two band members were palpable during the recording sessions at Compass Point Studios in the Bahamas. There was even talk of physical confrontations before band leader Malcolm finally lost patience with Rudd and the drummer was fired.

> "WHEN 'FLY…' CAME OUT, ROCK MUSIC WAS CHANGING. GENRES WERE BEING TURNED ON THEIR HEAD AND YOU HAD A LOT OF BIG HAIR AND GLAM BANDS COMING THROUGH. THEY WERE CLEARLY VERY DIFFERENT TO US. THAT AFFECTED THE WAY AC/DC WERE PORTRAYED IN THE MEDIA."

BJ Wilson, known for his work with Procol Harum, was brought in to replace Rudd's drum parts on the album, but the band were unhappy with the results and in the end the album was released featuring the original drums tracks that Rudd had laid down.

AC/DC HAD a vacant drum stool for an upcoming world tour, though, and after 'Flick Of The Switch' had been completed in May of '83, a number of auditions were held in both the US and the United Kingdom as the band sought to fill a sizeable void. Rudd's metronomic timing and his natural swing were a huge and often underrated part of AC/DC's rhythmic appeal. Big names were considered for the role, including Free and Bad Company's Simon Kirke, and Roxy Music's Paul Thompson. In the end, though, the band gave the prestigious gig to an unknown English teenager called Simon Wright, whose career up to that point had only included stints in grassroots metal bands A II Z and Tytan.

"I was still only 19 when I saw an advert in *Sounds* music paper saying that a well-known band was looking for a drummer," says Wright. "It never said who the band was, and to be honest I had no interest. But a friend of mine persuaded me to apply and in May of 1983 I was asked to go to Nomis Studios in West London.

A sweaty and hairy Angus doing what he does best. But did production work really suit him?

Photos: Getty Images/Michael Ochs Archives

Brian 'Beano' Johnson onstage at the Forum, Inglewood, California, 18 October 1985. "If you don't like our new album I'll rip yer head off!"

"I met up with the band's drum tech," continues Wright. "He took me through three songs I was supposed to play at the audition, which were AC/DC's 'Shoot To Thrill', 'Tush' by ZZ Top and Led Zeppelin's 'Black Dog'. At the end of the session the tech told me he thought my playing was great and that they'd be in touch. But I went away thinking that would be the last I'd hear from them, because that's what usually happened in those kind of situations."

Three hours later, though, Wright got a phone call...

"I was asked to come back the next day for a second audition at Nomis, this time with the band in question present. But I had no money and said that I couldn't afford to get back down there. I was told to take a taxi and that it would be paid for. When I arrived I was met by the drum tech I'd seen the previous day and was taken through to a much bigger studio than the one I'd been in the day before. As we were heading to the room I noticed that there were flight cases with the name 'AC/DC' on them in the corridor. I looked at the tech and said, 'You are joking, right?' He just smiled at me. I was amazed.

"I walked into the rehearsal studio and there were Angus, Malcolm and Cliff all waiting. Brian wasn't there. They were really friendly and went out of their way to make sure I was relaxed. We did four or five songs and it seemed to go well. When we'd finished playing together the three of them nodded to one another. Then we all sat down and had a chat. Still nothing had been said to me about what they thought, but we were getting along so well that I plucked up the courage and asked if all of this meant I was in the band. Malcolm looked at me and said, 'Yeah, it looks like it, doesn't it?' Simple as that! I was suddenly in one of the biggest rock'n'roll bands in the world! The thing was, there was no pressure at all during the entire process, it was just like a bunch of mates hanging out together. That's the way it came about.

"I didn't even have anywhere to practise my playing before the tour began," Simon continues. "So the band kept on Nomis for a few days so that I could go in there and play along to the songs and get them right."

THE TIME spent on the 'Flick Of The Switch' tour was enough to convince the band leaders that Wright was the man to play on the next studio album, which would turn out to be 'Fly On The Wall'.

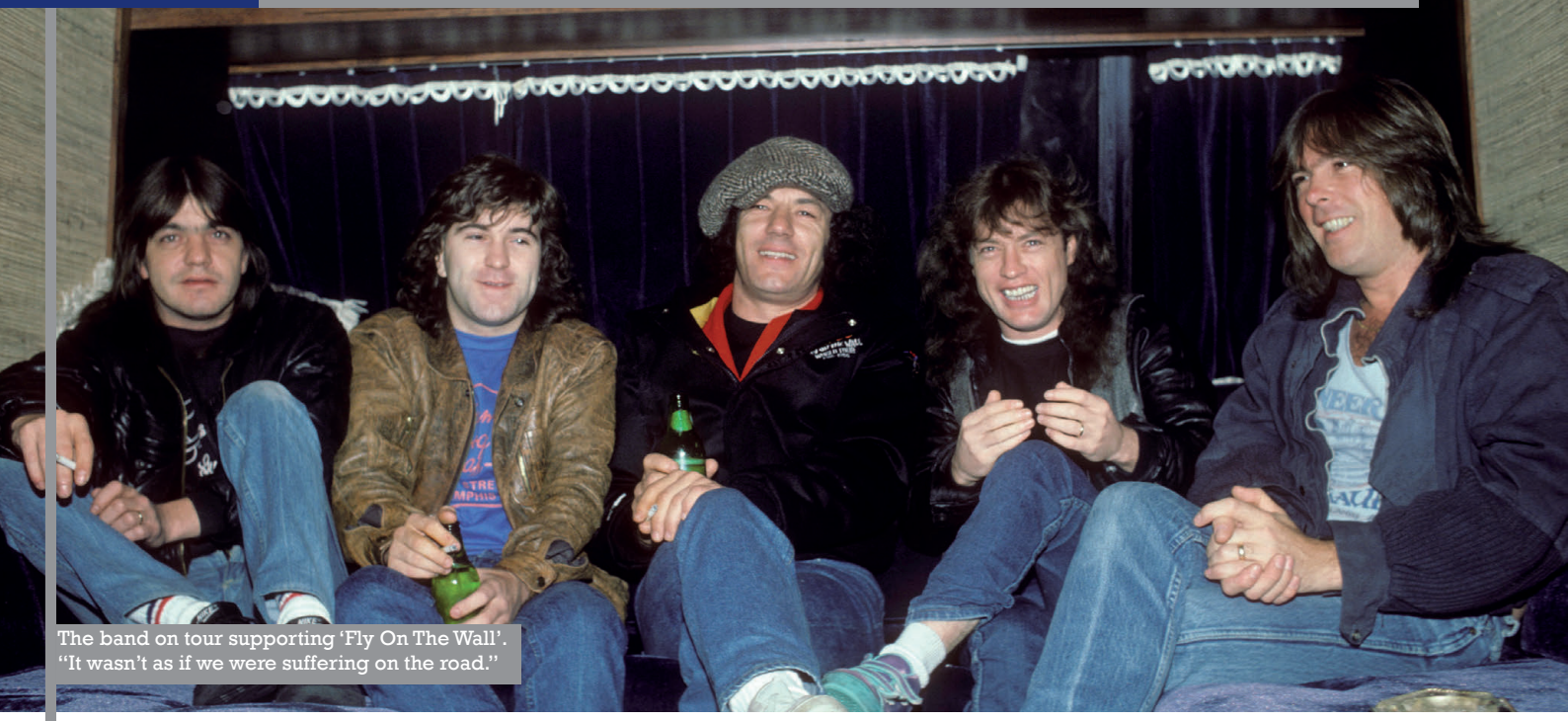
"There were no songs ready before the tour ended," Simon confesses, perhaps tellingly. "Angus, Malcolm and Brian just got down to the writing process and then we'd toss ideas around for the way the songs should be played until they sounded right." Not that he was accorded any writing credits.

"I was never regarded as an equal member alongside the others," Wright explains. "I was a hired hand, but I must say that I was very well treated throughout my time with AC/DC. To be honest, why should they have given me any sort of partner status? I was really young and wasn't ready for such recognition from such a massive band. I never got a percentage of the merchandise sales or music publishing money. But I was always looked after, and even though they were about 10 years older than me I was never made to feel inferior."

> "IT WAS A DIFFERENT TYPE OF AC/DC ALBUM. AND THAT MIGHT BE WHY IT GOT SUCH A NEGATIVE REACTION AT THE TIME. THE SONGS ARE CERTAINLY SLIGHTLY AWAY FROM THE NORM FOR THE BAND, BUT WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT?"

While the production credits had gone to AC/DC collectively for the previous release, 'Fly On The Wall' was credited solely to the Young brothers. Many fans think it was a mistake to handle the production of these two albums within the confines of the group. The band had worked first with Harry Vanda and (Angus and Malcolm's older brother) George Young, a duo who seemed to know how to capture AC/DC's raw boogie energy, and then with the incomparable 'Mutt' Lange. To many ears these two records, 'Flick Of The Switch' and 'Fly On The Wall', were sonically average, plodding rather than sparky. Simon disagrees.

DARK DAYS



The band on tour supporting 'Fly On The Wall'. "It wasn't as if we were suffering on the road."

"Angus and Malcolm had a really good handle on the way everything should sound," he insists. "We rehearsed a lot before going to Montreux so that everything was ready when we went in to record. There was never a feeling of being under pressure to get it all done. We'd play a song through until we had the right groove and go from there. Everyone was always in the studio on time and we'd work hard on the recording sessions, but it wasn't a very strict environment. We had regular breaks and all of us were living in the same house. And after we'd finished the session each day we'd all go down to the local bar for a few drinks. I have to say, we had a lot of fun making the album and there were a lot of laughs."

WHEN THE album was released in June 1985, 'Fly On The Wall' peaked at number seven in the UK, the band's lowest studio album chart position since 'Powerage' back in 1978. In America it fared even worse, only reaching number 32, again their poorest chart performance since 'Powerage'. There was an attempt to nod to the power of MTV as the band recorded a series of five interlinked videos at a New York City bar, making use of some storyboards and even a superimposed cartoon fly to reflect the album title. But it all came across as a bit forced. Yet despite the view that 'Fly On The Wall' was a disappointment, at the time Simon Wright never felt that the band was on the slide.

"We did a big tour and it sold out – and I'm talking about huge venues here – so it wasn't as if we were suffering on the road. Our set list mostly featured the songs fans always love to hear, and if the new stuff didn't quite go down so well that was because those songs weren't as well known as the earlier material. Bands always have this trouble. Whenever you tour, it's the classics that get the best reaction. Anything from your new album doesn't go down so well, because it simply isn't part of your touring history. So we never got the impression that the fans were turning against us."

WITH THE benefit of hindsight, it's easy to see that AC/DC were always going to be on a hiding to nothing during this period of their career. Creatively it was always going to be nigh on impossible to compete with the holy trinity of 'Powerage', 'Highway To Hell' and 'Back In Black'. Commercially, of course, everything was always going to be dwarfed by 'Back In Black'.

Given the band's hard-won reputation for delivering consistently sensational live shows, the 86-date 'Fly On The Wall' tour still did good business. But it's interesting to note that the experiment with album self-production was laid to rest when AC/DC brought back Harry Vanda and George Young to produce three new tracks – 'Who Made Who', 'Chase The Ace' and 'D.T.' These songs were recorded for the soundtrack to horror writer Stephen King's *Maximum Overdrive* movie and were released, together with a number of well-known DC recordings, on a 1986 album titled 'Who Made Who'. The band was King's favourite act. Vanda and Young would also go on to direct operations on the next full studio album, 1988's 'Blow Up Your Video'. For his part, Simon Wright was happy to work under them.

> "I LIKE EVERYTHING WE DID ON 'FLY ON THE WALL'. THE SONGS AND THE RECORDINGS WERE VERY STRONG, AND I'M VERY PROUD TO HAVE PLAYED A ROLE IN AC/DC'S HISTORY."

"It helped having them around, because they made sure we were a lot more focused and workmanlike than had been the case on the previous album. They obviously knew the band very well, and how to get the best out of everyone, including me. I was also a little more experienced in the way AC/DC liked things done by that time, so was less under stress and more relaxed. But I still didn't try to force my opinions about anything onto the rest of them. I didn't try to alter anything either. All I wanted to do was make sure my contributions to the albums were as good as they could be, and make sure

Photos: Getty Images/Michael Ochs Archive; Getty Images/Ebet Roberts/Redferns

that I wasn't letting anybody down."

THE BAND toured for the whole of 1988 in support of 'Blow Up Your Video'. But a year later, in November 1989, Simon quit the band to join Dio. Leaving a group that had toughed it out through a difficult decade and yet had still maintained its position as one of the premier rock bands in the world might seem counter-intuitive. But Wright says he's still certain that it was the right move.

"I was getting complacent and frustrated," he admits. "With a band like AC/DC you have to play in a certain style and accept that's the way things are always going to be. You never had the freedom to express yourself fully and I wanted to play with a lot less restraint and in a different style. It was becoming clear that the situation wasn't good for me, for the rest of the band... for anyone. And it was in everyone's best interests that I move on.

"There wasn't an actual moment when I told them I was quitting," he admits. "But there were a few phone calls between us and it was inevitable that I was going to leave. That was accepted by all parties. I know those outside of the band's inner circle were shocked that I made the choice. How could I even *think* of leaving a band that was so big? But for me it was all about having the freedom to do what I wanted. If I'd carried on with AC/DC and tried to hold back my real musical aspirations, then it could all have ended very badly with them. Thankfully I was able to go on good terms, and with my happy memories intact. Those years with AC/DC were very important for me. They really helped me, not only on a musical level, but also in giving me the confidence to be able to deal with being part of a big band."

Has Angus just seen a fly on the wall?

IT'S NOW almost 30 years since Simon Wright left AC/DC and in that time he's had very little contact with anyone from his old band.

"I kept in touch with the drum tech who was at my audition for a while, but then we lost contact. As for Angus and Malcolm, I always knew they protected their privacy and I have a lot of respect for that. They were wary of people and liked to keep things under their own control and in check. I didn't think they would welcome any communications from me, so I never tried to get hold of them. Mind you, having said that I want to underline how well they looked after me while I was the band's drummer. They made my life wonderful."

How does Simon look back on the 'Fly On The Wall' album now with the benefit of so much hindsight?

"It was a different type of AC/DC album," he admits. "And that might be why it got such a negative reaction at the time. The songs are certainly slightly away from the norm for the band, but what's wrong with that? I've had a lot of fans come up to me in recent years and say that they now appreciate what we were doing. As for me, I think back to when we were making the album, and what I remember is that those were really fun times.

"The other point people should bear in mind was that when 'Fly...' came out, rock music was changing. Genres were being turned on their head and you had a lot of big hair and glam bands coming through. They were clearly very different to us. That affected the way AC/DC were portrayed in the media. We were the sort of musicians who had no egos or big time attitude. We went onstage dressed as if we were going to a bar, which was certainly part of our charm. But then you suddenly had all of these young wannabes who were really overdressed and worried about their image. When you put us up against them, then it was obvious we'd look lacklustre compared to what they did. But that was what always made us different. We weren't the sort of band who went for superficiality over the music. And if it didn't fit in with any trend, then so what? Angus and Malcolm were never going to alter their approach for a style that would be gone in two years. And they were right. The band's longevity proves it.

"I like everything we did on 'Fly On The Wall'. The songs and the recordings were very strong, and I'm very proud to have played a role in AC/DC's history."

EYEWITNESS Dateline: October 1990

Status Quo aboard the ultra-luxurious 'Quo Express'. L-R: John 'Rhino' Edwards (bass), Andy Bown (keyboards), Jeff Rich (drums), Francis Rossi (guitar and vocals), Rick Parfitt (guitar and vocals)

Back in 1990 revered British rockers **Status Quo** decided to celebrate an anniversary in truly oddball style. They hired a train and took a load of music biz folk down to an English holiday camp called Butlin's, where frontmen Francis Rossi and Rick Parfitt had first met 25 years earlier. *Jon Hotten* was on the train that day. Here's his story...

IT'S MID-MORNING ON 10 October 1990, at Paddington railway station, West London. Standing at the entrance to the rock'n'roll equivalent of Harry Potter's platform nine and three quarters is renowned English rock DJ Alan 'Fluff' Freeman, wearing his familiar dark glasses and a blue knitted jumper, the collar of his shirt skew-whiff and poking up from underneath.

"We're actually going to leave Paddington Station," explains Fluff. "We're going down to Billy Butlin's Holiday Camp in Minehead, because that's where Status Quo started 25 years ago, then we're going to have a party, and anything could happen. The fans are gonna turn up and Quo are gonna go down there and meet them. We're really gonna have a 25th celebration, and they'll be going 25 years from now. Happy Birthday Status Quo, alright? Not 'alf..." Stretched along the platform edge is a train with rather low rent photocopied signs stuck in the windows that say 'Quo Express'.

Admission through the ticket barriers is by invitation only, an eggshell blue card that reads: 'You are invited to Status Quo's 25th Anniversary Waltz at Butlins Somerwest World, Minehead. Status Quo and special guest, with a post-gig party. Karaoke Contest: More Accurate Than A Metropolitan Police Breath Test!' The

BUTLIN'S BOOGIE!

last line is plain weird, presumably claiming that how well – or badly – you sing karaoke is an ideal way to judge how drunk you are.

Then again, this is no normal outing. This much is clear from a sneaky glance through the glass windows of the train. Each of its carriages is a dining car, the tables laid with heavy linen cloths and gleaming sliver service. The Quo Express is filling, slowly, with its 'invited guests', a rather grand term for the bedraggled, bleary-eyed circus trying and failing to find their allocated seats – hacks, photographers, liggers, record company employees, PRs, DJs, local TV crews, band members, management, and for some reason or other, actress Vicki Michelle from popular UK TV series *'Allo 'Allo!*. A hierarchy becomes apparent as this scramble sorts itself out. In the carriage at the front of the train are Quo guitarists, vocalists and mainstays Francis Rossi and Rick Parfitt, both in denim shirts, their manager David Walker, the rest of the band and their starriest guests – namely DJ, TV personality and Quo megafan Chris Tarrant, and revered UK rock record spinner Annie Nightingale. This process reverses back through the carriages, the guests quickly slipping from fame toward infamy, until the lowest of the low are found at the rear, namely the gentlemen and women of the press, people like me, representatives of the monthlies and weeklies, inkies and glossies, plus the tabloid newspapers. People are anticipating the day ahead with varying degrees of enthusiasm.

THE CUTLERY wobbles a little as the Quo Express eases out of the station, bearing its heavy load. A cheer goes up as along the aisles come the 'Quo-stesses', dressed in red jackets and white skirts and pushing carts full of beer and champagne. Their hope is, I'm sure, that they will be providing a civilised pre-lunch pick-me-up. Within 10 minutes of departure, though, it's announced that all of the beer has gone, and lunch itself becomes the best hope of avoiding an alcohol drought on this

Photo: Tony Mottram

EYEWITNESS Dateline: October 1990

Quo get down and, er, boogie. Note high quality 25th anniversary backdrop

non-Orient express. According to the rather decorously presented menu, it's rack of lamb with apple and nut stuffing, roast potatoes, carrot batons and petit pois, all of which disappears into the collective ravenous maw as quickly as the beer.

Much merriment ensues when Steve 'Krusher' Joule – whose day-job is as the designer at *Kerrang!*, but who has recently opened up a second career as a DJ on Greater London Radio – hears a strange chirruping coming from about his person. The ringtone of a mobile [cell] phone is unfamiliar enough in 1990 to have half of the carriage agog. Even the term 'mobile' has yet to catch on – a 'porta-phone' is how it's described at the time. This miracle of new technology – once Krusher has worked out how to answer the damn thing – somehow connects him to the radio station for a live broadcast from the train. He reads aloud from the menu and cackles in his own inimitable way.

A holiday spirit is taking hold. It's the equivalent of getting drunk in the airport bar before the flight has taken off. And by the time the Quo Express docks at Taunton station and we're transferred onto a fleet of coaches, the greatest hits of Status Quo are being sung, loudly, for the benefit of a camera taking footage for a proposed video of the anniversary gig. That gig is still some hours away, though. The question is, has everyone peaked too soon?

1990 WAS a strange year for Status Quo. The 'classic' line-up had broken up late in 1981, when drummer John Coghlan was replaced by Pete Kircher, but that change failed to relieve the inner band angst that had built through a decade of hard touring and harder living.

"Everyone was coked up and hating each other," Rossi said, and a gig at the Milton Keynes Bowl in the summer of 1984 was supposed to be their last. Rossi actually got so drunk he didn't remember playing it.

Live Aid a year later was their saving grace. Rossi and Rick Parfitt were about to make solo records when Bob Geldof picked up the phone. "I said, 'Look Bob, we're not getting along, we're not rehearsed, we'll sound like a sack of sh*t'," recounted Rossi. "He said, 'It doesn't matter a f*ck what you sound like, you're the ones!' Subsequently I found out he said the same thing to everybody."

But Geldof was right, too. Status Quo opening the London show with 'Rockin' All Over The World' became a real 'I remember where I was' moment.

Afterwards bassist Alan Lancaster returned to his home in Australia, and Rossi and Parfitt began recording with a new bassist, John 'Rhino' Edwards, and drummer Jeff Rich. Parfitt had met the pair while making his abandoned solo album. Lancaster sued, but didn't officially leave Quo until reaching an out of court settlement in 1987, by which time the new line-up had a restorative hit with 'In the Army Now' and toured as support to Queen.

Then the following year they had another big song, 'Burning Bridges (On And Off And On Again)', that very much divided their fan base. For many of the Quo purists, it confirmed the band's lurch toward becoming a novelty act.

By 1990 the question had become, how could Quo stop a slow slide into artistic irrelevance? At least the line-up was settled. The new guys, Edwards and Rich, had played together for a long time in Judie Tzuke's

Two delighted members of the 3000 strong Quo Army at Butlin's

Rossi, Parfitt and *'Allo 'Allo!* star Vicki Michelle (second from right) show their appreciation for the Quo-stesses

band (where Rhino had picked up his nickname, bestowed for the way he clattered about noisily) and they had that most prized quality among jobbing musicians – affability. They simply got on with the job – no mess, no fuss, no egos.

THE '25TH anniversary' that we were en route to mark that day was not actually that of Status Quo – that name wasn't used until 1967. The anniversary was actually to mark the first meeting of Rossi and Parfitt, which had come about at Butlin's holiday camp back in 1965.

Parfitt had left home at 15 after being spotted playing in a pub by a talent scout who recruited for holiday entertainers. He went to the Sunshine Holiday Camp on Hayling Island, where he met the Harrison Twins, Jean and Gloria, and formed a trio called The Highlights. It was all very clean cut and innocent, but when they found themselves, a couple of years later, at Butlin's in Minehead to do their family-friendly show, the 'rock'n'roll ballroom' had been taken over by The Spectres, a rock band that included Francis Rossi on guitar, Alan Lancaster on bass and John Coghlan on drums. Parfitt joined them just in time for the band's name change to Status Quo and their first hit, 'Pictures Of Matchstick Men', in 1968.

THE BAND DIDN'T EVEN HAVE TO DO ANY INTERVIEWS, ALTHOUGH PARFITT WAS KEEN TO LET EVERYONE KNOW THAT HE'D SHED A COUPLE OF STONE AFTER GIVING UP DRINKING, AN ABSTINENCE HE WAS PLANNING TO BREAK IN SOME STYLE AT BUTLIN'S.

This particular 'anniversary waltz' had been cleverly cooked up by Quo's manager David Walker and their PR Simon Porter, who would take over as manager on Walker's death in 2001. It was smart thinking. First, it legitimised the pair's meeting as the central piece of Quo mythology, reinforcing in everyone's minds that the Rossi and Parfitt axis was the band's key partnership. And Simon Porter had rightly surmised that taking a bunch of music industry freeloaders on a train to Butlin's would generate more interest and column inches than a standard press junket that might involve a trip to New York or LA and an expensive hotel. The band didn't even have to do any interviews, although Parfitt was keen to let everyone know that he'd shed a couple of stone after giving up drinking, an abstinence he was planning to break in some style at Butlin's.

It was the ultimate party, and no one wanted to miss out – especially the band...

OUR ARRIVAL at Butlin's Somerwest World offers a degree of calm ahead of the brewing storm. It's the middle of October and the weather is truly grim. Along with the holidaymakers, 3000 Quo fans have tickets for the show in the same ballroom where The Spectres once played. The *Kerrang!* party – myself, Krusher and our photographer, Ray Palmer (RIP) – are allocated a family chalet in a place called Begonia House, and despite the grey and drizzly late autumn weather lending the camp all the romance of a motorway service station, everything is bright and cheery and actually a higher spec than a lot of overpriced hotel rooms. Bags are dumped and the grounds are explored, where the first remarkable event takes place.

There is a small record shop on site, only big enough to allow two or three people in at a time. From it emerges a beaming Dave Ling – then *RAW* magazine correspondent and now *Rock Candy Mag* writer – clutching a picture disc by the obscure (even at the time) Swedish death metal band Bathory.

"I've been looking for this..." he says, and wanders off happily, leaving the rest of us to ponder exactly who in the Butlin's organisation had ordered the stock for this shop, that otherwise contained only the hits of Queen and George Michael.

Perhaps it's an omen. As the effects of the conspicuous consumption on the Quo Express hit home, the siren song of Begonia House becomes overwhelming. Plenty of rock'n'roll desperados, including us, head back to their lodgings for a pre-gig nap and a much-needed freshen-up. Aussie soap opera *Neighbours* is on the telly, the kettle's on and another more impromptu show gains a receptive audience when a local radio DJ fails to realise that his chalet curtains aren't drawn as he wanders about his residence in the buff, the cold apparently taking its dreaded effect on his manhood.

Before the gig, Paul Elliott, *Sounds* music paper correspondent (now *Rock Candy Mag* writer), discovers that there's an early evening show by Ken Goodwin, an 'old school' TV comedian whose catchphrase,

Photos: Tony Mottram

EYEWITNESS Dateline: October 1990

"I'm too good for this place," proves to be horribly untrue when he walks on stage and kicks off his set with a joke so non-PC and offensive that it hurts even to think about it now.

Thankfully, the time for Quo is almost nigh. The advertised 'Special Guest' turns out to be Francis Rossi's son, who has a band that plays covers of Bryan Adams and Bad Company. Rossi Jnr's performance is unlikely to give his old man the jitters about son supplanting father in the nation's affections.

AND THEN at last, as this long day draws to its close, here they come. With those 3000 Quo fanatics crammed into the ballroom where their heroes first clapped eyes on each other a quarter-century gone by, the band can hardly fail to conquer and, of course, they don't.

By Quo's standards, they've shaken things up a bit. Rossi has eschewed his famous waistcoat and collarless shirt combo for a white T-shirt that matches that of his partner in crime, the newly svelte Rick Parfitt. And they both seem to be loving this big occasion.

They begin with 'Down Down' rather than the standard 'Caroline', and, having cribbed an idea from their mates Queen at Live Aid, incorporate a medley called 'The Anniversary Waltz' into the set. It all slips down as easily as the beer aboard the Quo Express, although the hardened fanatics are less pleased that some of the band's most beloved numbers – 'Mystery Song', 'Roadhouse Blues', 'Most Of The Time', 'Again And Again' – are crammed into a few minutes to allow for longer versions of 'In The Army Now' and some of the rock'n'roll standards that make up their recent 'Anniversary Waltz' single.

Even so, when it pops up in the set, 'Burning Bridges' does manage to prompt some interesting drunken folk-dancing among the audience, resulting in the aforementioned Paul Elliott kicking over Chris Tarrant's pint, which has been carefully stationed by the front of the stage. He isn't pleased. But fun is being had. It's all over bar the mopping-up.

By contrast the much-hyped karaoke is something of a disappointment. In 1990 karaoke is such a new phenomenon that the concept needs to be explained to the audience at the post-gig party which, singing contest aside, is a no-expense-spared bacchanal. One side of the room is lined by tables heaving with expensive seafood, and any request for a drink – wine, champagne – results in the bottle simply being handed over the bar.

A TRIUMPHANT ROSSI AND PARFITT ARE CALLED FORWARD TO RECEIVE A GIANT CAKE BAKED IN THE SHAPE OF A FENDER TELECASTER GUITAR. HERE'S A PROPER ROCK'N'ROLL 'DO' IN THE MOST UNLIKELY OF LOCATIONS.

A triumphant Rossi and Parfitt are called forward to receive a giant cake baked in the shape of a Fender Telecaster guitar, and the reason for Vicki Michelle's presence on the trip suddenly becomes clear. She hands the cake over to the beaming pair with a saucy smile befitting her TV waitress character. Here's a proper rock'n'roll 'do' in the most unlikely of locations and, suitably re-refreshed, we enlist for this new Japanese singing show. Krusher, Elliott and I are signed up to give a rendition of the debut hit by a 'little' band from LA called Guns N' Roses, so imagine the disappointment in the room when the Butlin's bosses decree that the hour is late and the gleaming machine must be switched off before our titanic version of 'Sweet Child O' Mine' can be heard. And so the evening ends.

The next morning, the Quo Express makes a rather subdued return to London, some blinding hangovers lifting only as the capital hoves into view. Quo aren't aboard, but the trip had been a wild success, covered by more than 300 outlets.

Parfitt, Rossi and Quo members receive the legendary guitar cake. Also in shot Vicki Michelle (far left) along with radio DJs Chris Tarrant (second from right) and Alan 'Fluff' Freeman (far right)

IN RETROSPECT, this crazy Minehead road trip heralded the start of a new era for the band, one that tapped into an odd kind of nostalgia and Britishness. Simon Porter dreamed up lots more appealing stunts for the band over the next decades. For 1991's 'Rock 'Til You Drop' album Quo played gigs in Sheffield, Glasgow, Birmingham and London over the course of just 12 hours. In 2000 they went to Australia and played on a train, the Grand South Pacific Express, in the middle of the outback. And Rossi and Parfitt also appeared as themselves in a ludicrous but affectionate 2005 storyline for Britain's best loved soap opera, *Coronation Street*. They then played the Concert For Diana at the new Wembley Stadium in London in 2007, and Rossi and Parfitt were awarded an OBE by Queen Elizabeth II in 2010. Even stranger, they made a feature film called *Bula Quo* – an adventure comedy in which the band get caught up in mafia operations on the island of Fiji – that was released in 2013.

Writer Jon Hotten gets into the spirit, flanked by two exceedingly hairy people

That same year, and despite Rossi's serious reservations, the best-loved Quo line-up successfully reformed as The Frantic Four with Alan Lancaster and John Coghlan back in the fold, before Rossi and Parfitt went acoustic (or 'Aquostic' as they punningly christened it) in 2014.

Those 'buddies back together' gigs were received ecstatically by the band's adoring fans, but Rossi later claimed that the performances were poor. He and Lancaster fell out once again. The 'new' Quo did more live dates, but then Parfitt became ill in the summer of 2016 and died from sepsis following a shoulder injury six months later. What had begun at Minehead in 1965 had finally come to an end.

Only recently has Francis Rossi had time to absorb the loss of Parfitt and reflect on the nature of their relationship, which was inevitably more complex from the inside than it appeared to the fans and industry on the outside. Six months before Parfitt's death, Rossi had watched as the musician collapsed from a heart attack after a gig in Turkey. "It was f*cking horrible..." he said, and even though Parfitt somehow survived, "I think he knew he wasn't going to live as long as me."

Rossi felt that his relationship with Parfitt had begun to change around 1977, when 'Rockin' All Over The World' became a hit and Parfitt said that he was "fed up" with being the number two. Rossi told Paul Elliott that he felt the situation degenerated on both sides at that point: "I was being a c*nt, and Rick was being a c*nt. That's when he and I began to drift apart... Various people fed into Rick's ego. He was trying to live this image that people had convinced him was who he should be. With the Rick I loved and knew, there wasn't much male ego. He had an ego, but it wasn't macho at all."

Back in 2006, long before his health deteriorated, Rick Parfitt returned to Hayling Island and met up once again with the Harrison Twins to make a little film about their time together at the Sunshine Camp. At one point he breaks out his guitar and they sing together again, the first song they ever wrote, 'Thinking Of You'.

"We wrote it," he says to the camera, "and it sounded so lovely... We thought, 'This is it...'" And in many ways Rick Parfitt was right...

Photos: Tony Mottram

THE BEST OF ENEMIES

The idea that people playing in bands together hate each other's guts is as old as the hills. The difference with **Dokken** guitarist **George Lynch** and the band's singer **Don Dokken** was that they didn't care who knew it. *Paul Elliott* talks to both musos about a lifelong mistrust and how their volatile relationship still managed to yield 20 million album sales!

FOR ONE OF THE great rock bands of the '80s there was always a problem. No matter how high they flew, selling millions of albums and playing on the world's biggest stages, there was undeniably something rotten at the core of Dokken, a bitter feud between the singer who gave the band its name, and the guitar hero who never liked the vocalist in the first place and grew to dislike him even more as fame, money, ego and drugs took hold.

Don Dokken and George Lynch made some great music together. In a decade when fellow LA bands such as Mötley Crüe and RATT were at their commercial peak, Dokken delivered some of the best albums of the era in 'Breaking The Chains', 'Tooth And Nail', 'Under Lock And Key', 'Back For The Attack' and the double live set 'Beast From The East', all of which have been reissued by Rock Candy Records. But the friction between the singer and the guitarist was the band's undoing, and although there have been brief reunions over the years, the animosity between them still lingers to this day.

> "DON WASN'T LIKE A NORMAL GUY YOU COULD TALK TO. IT WAS STRAINED AND WEIRD. HE HAD TO CONTROL THE CONVERSATION IN THE ROOM. ALL EYES HAD TO BE ON HIM. THERE WAS OBVIOUSLY A LITTLE BULLSH*T GOING ON."
> **GEORGE LYNCH**

THE STORY begins with two very different personalities, shaped by difficult childhoods, coming together in the late '70s in the fabled Sunset Strip rock scene. Their early days in bands were a struggle. To get a record deal, Don had to go to Germany, and it was there, during the recording of the first Dokken album in 1981, that he ended up playing a role in the creation of the Scorpions' classic album 'Blackout'. A year later, with Dokken's future not guaranteed, George auditioned for Ozzy Osbourne, but lost out to Jake E. Lee. It was another heartbreak for the guitarist whose earlier band, The Boyz, had been courted by Gene Simmons before Van Halen stole their thunder.

A change of fortune came when Cliff Burnstein, co-manager of Def Leppard, signed Dokken and got them a deal with major label Elektra. George's place in the group was finally secured because both Burnstein and Elektra wanted him as part of the package. But as the band's popularity soared, so the rivalry between Don and George escalated. Don realised he was in a sober-ish minority of one as George partied hard with drummer Mick Brown and bassist Jeff Pilson. In 1988, when Dokken opened for AC/DC on a UK tour, Don and George came to blows in a parking lot at Wembley Arena. And after Dokken's humiliation on that year's Monsters Of Rock stadium tour, when they were blown off stage time and again by the band that preceded them, Metallica, an acrimonious split soon followed.

DOKKEN REUNITED in the '90s, but the grunge-influenced 1997 album 'Shadowlife' was George's last studio recording with the band. Since then, Don has made five Dokken studio albums, backed by an ever-changing cast of musicians. In 2016, he and George ►

Photo: IconicPix/PG Brunelli

The band photographed backstage at Wembley Arena, London, March 1988. But was this before or after the car park fist fight?

DOKKEN

"It's not like a Bon Jovi or a Metallica, but if 20 million people enjoy my music, that's a pretty big honour."

managed to put hostilities on hold for the classic Dokken line-up to tour in Japan, yielding the 'Return To The East Live' album. And earlier this year came the eponymous debut album from The End Machine, featuring three-quarters of the classic Dokken line-up – Lynch, Pilson and Brown – along with a singer, Robert Mason, formerly of George's band Lynch Mob. But as Don now tells *Rock Candy Mag*, there will never be another Dokken album with George Lynch. "I've been offered sh*tloads of money to do it," Don says. "But the thought of trying to get together with George one more time... I couldn't take it."

There will be no fairytale ending to the story of rock's most dysfunctional band – a story that is told here, with brutal honesty, by Don Dokken and George Lynch.

THE LOST BOYS

DON DOKKEN: "I was raised in foster homes. My mom was 16 when she had me. My dad was 17. And then when he got drafted for the Korean War my mom couldn't handle it, so I was sent to a foster home. The name Dokken is Norwegian, but when I was a kid everybody thought I was German. I was in a home with eight other kids. My escape was to go in the garage where there was a little record player and some 45s, The Kinks and the Stones. When I went to Venice High School in LA I started playing drums, then guitar. But I never thought about being a famous rock star. In my early bands I became the singer by default, because we had singers who quit. I'm not a great singer."

GEORGE LYNCH: "I was 10 when The Beatles emerged. That was good timing. I identified with George Harrison quite a bit due to the name. Later, the guitar hero appeared – Hendrix, Clapton, Page. My dad was a traveling salesman, so we moved around the country a lot. My guitar was my solace and my friend. But around the age of 14 I started getting in trouble, drinking and drugging and being defiant. I was constantly running away from home. I wanted to get out into the world, ride the rails. So my guitar was taken away, my head was shaved and I was shipped off to live with my very strict godparents in a little place in southern California, just a lumber mill and not much else. That straightened me out, and I got my guitar back."

> "I BELIEVED THAT IF WE HAD SUCCESS, IF WE HAD MONEY, THEN GEORGE WOULD BE HAPPY. BUT AS I SAID TO MICK BROWN, 'IT SEEMS LIKE THE MORE FAMOUS WE GET, THE MORE UNHAPPY GEORGE IS.' IT WAS THE ODDEST THING I'VE EVER SEEN IN MY LIFE."
> **DON DOKKEN**

THE STRIP

DON: "My band Airborn gigged at the Whiskey A Go Go and the Starwood [in the late '70s]. We played with Van Halen all the time on the Strip. The dream was to headline at the Whiskey on a Friday night for 300 people. Man, if we did that, we'd made it."

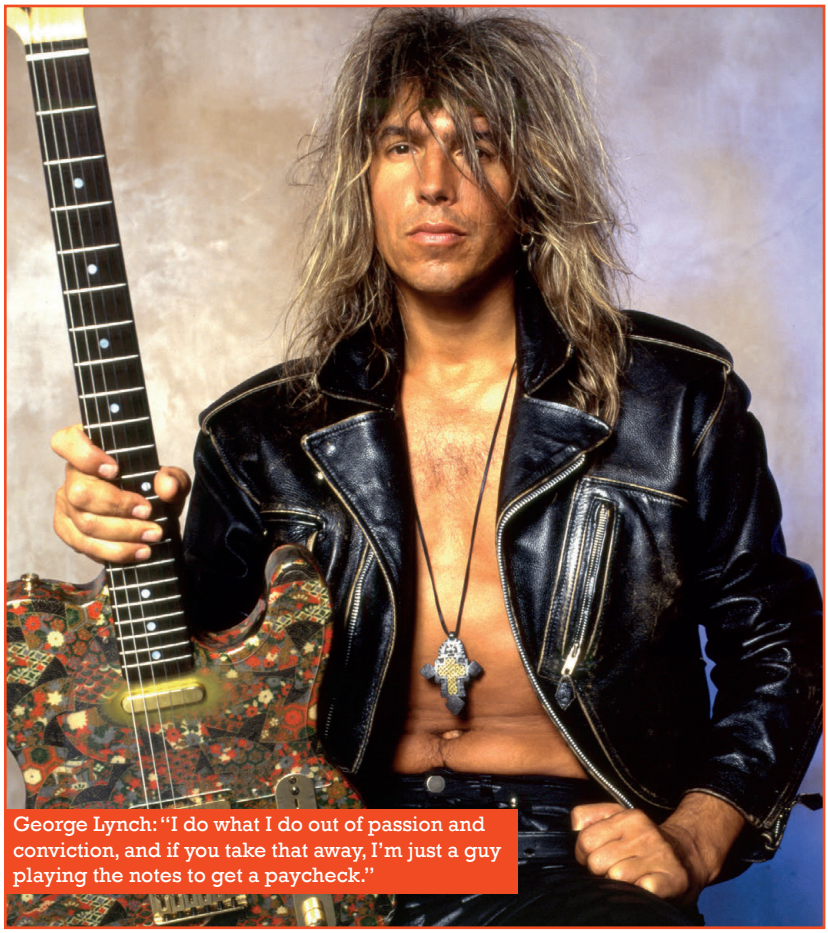
GEORGE: "I moved to northern California and we had a band called Sgt. Roxx – glitter rock, very influenced by Kiss and the New York Dolls. We had a band room with egg cartons all over the walls, and we'd do full rehearsals in there with pyro. One day it caught fire and burned the whole place the ground, with all our equipment. That was the end of that band! Then I formed The Boyz with Mick Brown. I was the singer and lead guitar player and we played covers, Montrose and Deep Purple. Eventually we decided to give it a go in Los Angeles. We got a singer, Michael White, a Robert Plant look and soundalike [who eventually got his own solo deal], except he played flute like Ian Anderson. I don't know how, but he would blow fire out of his flute. We weren't crazy about it, but he said, 'If the fiery flute solo doesn't go over like gangbusters I'll drop it.' And he wore these see-through stretchy pants with no underwear. It was

Photos: Getty Images/Michael Ochs Archives; Tony Mottram

really hard to watch, so we ended up getting rid of him and got Greg Sanford, whose brother is Rick Sanford, the singer in Legs Diamond. I remember one night I went to see Harvey Mandel, the guitarist in Canned Heat, at the Starwood. Eddie Van Halen was there too. Harvey was doing a solo where he incorporated two-hand tapping, and I think that influenced both of us."

BRIEF ENCOUNTER WITH THE GOD OF THUNDER

GEORGE: "The Boyz played a show at Gazzari's on the Strip with The Runaways, and Gene Simmons was there. He told me he liked the band. We said he should come and see us at the Starwood later that week. Unfortunately, we were opening up for Van Halen, who were hot as balls. We weren't bad, but we didn't have a great night. We didn't have David Lee Roth and I'm not Eddie. We had our hopes up that night, thinking something might happen, but after the show we were alone in our dressing room going, 'Where's everybody at?' We thought Gene would pop in. Then we heard: 'Everybody's down the hall in Van Halen's dressing room. That's where the party is.' I stuck my head in and there's Dave with two champagne bottles, people dancing on tables, and Gene is making deals. I skulked back to our dressing room to lick my wounds and come up with a new plan. I guess it was a good learning experience. That band [The Boyz] later turned into Xciter. We wrote 'Paris Is Burning' and some others that became Dokken songs."



George Lynch: "I do what I do out of passion and conviction, and if you take that away, I'm just a guy playing the notes to get a paycheck."

WHEN DON MET GEORGE

DON: "I knew George from the Strip. I thought The Boyz was a great band, and Mick Brown was a great drummer. But George was eccentric, even back then."

GEORGE: "When the band became Xciter we played a gig with Airborn at the Starwood, and they were playing one of our songs. I asked Don about it and he said it was one of his songs that he'd written. Oh, OK. That should have been a big red light. Don wasn't like a normal guy you could talk to. It was strained and weird. He had to control the conversation in the room. All eyes had to be on him. There was obviously a little bullsh*t going on."

THE BIRTH OF DOKKEN

DON: Airborn was getting kind of popular, but we had to change our name because some other band called Airborne [featuring future RATT producer Beau Hill] got a record deal. So that's why the band became Dokken, not out of ego. One of the first times we played as Dokken was with Van Halen and Quiet Riot – Randy Rhoads's last gigs with Quiet Riot before he joined Ozzy's band. I still have the flyer from that show. But this was a weird phase in LA. Rock was in and then it was out. It was all new wave and punk. So I went to Germany and the manager of Accept, Gaby Hauke, took my demo to Carrere Records and got me a deal."

GEORGE: "Don came back and was telling us these great stories about how he was hooked up with certain people, that it was a great opportunity. We were pretty young and dying to get out and do something."

DON: "I needed a band, but honestly, I didn't want George. I said from day one, 'This is not gonna work.' I was a lead guitarist and a lead singer, and I wanted a three-piece. So I got Mick and Juan Croucier, who ended up in RATT. Mick kept pushing me to get George in the band, and he was certainly a great guitar player."

BLACKOUT

GEORGE: "At the studio in Germany we were doing our first record in the basement, and the Scorpions were recording upstairs."

DON: "I was into the Scorpions back in the day, when they had Uli Jon Roth on guitar. I loved 'Fly To The Rainbow' and 'Virgin Killer'. Their breakout record was 'Blackout' and I did the background vocals. Klaus [Meine] had problems with his voice. They wanted me to do the groundwork, those high harmonies, to save Klaus's voice, because he'd had surgery on his vocal cords. Truth is, I can hear myself on that record, but they buried my vocals. I have a tape, the entire 'Blackout' album with me singing lead vocals and harmonies. For years they denied this, making me look like a bullsh*tter. Then years later we became good friends."

GEORGE: "Matthias [Jabs, Scorpions lead guitarist] was on me quite a bit. 'Show me that thing you do, that California rock lick.' Or, 'What's this thing that Eddie Van Halen does?' I'd show him stuff. I didn't realise he was going right back in the studio and laying down everything I showed him. There were some licks on that record that were just verbatim of mine. That's ballsy! But whatever – I probably stole it all from somewhere."

THE STING IN THE TALE

DON: "When I got George and Mick in the band they were working as truck drivers, delivering wine

to liquor stores. They said, 'Hey, we'll go to Germany and make this record if you give us two thousand dollars each.'"

GEORGE: "We had no idea what was going on business-wise. It was Don who was handling it. Don took care of himself. He had a woman he was seeing in Germany, and he lived at her flat right on a lake, eating good food. We were all stuck in an immigrant hotel, in an attic with no door on the shower. Don told people that he paid us, but to get home from Germany I had to sell some equipment to get a plane ticket and very fortunately I also got a last minute job writing songs and playing guitar for Udo Lindenberg, a German artist. I made 800 marks and I was able to get myself home."

THE FIRST ALBUM

DON: "As soon as we got back to LA Juan Croucier said to me, 'I can't be in a band where there's constant turmoil – arguing, fighting. I don't need this in my life.' So he left. I don't blame him. I would have left too, but I couldn't leave my own band. So Juan joined RATT, who hadn't made it then, and the album we made [originally titled 'Breakin' The Chains', minus the 'g'] came out in Germany in 1981 with me on the sleeve and the name Don Dokken. It was like a solo record. And the song 'Breaking The Chains' got the name of Dokken out there. They called it a passive hit. Everybody loved the song, and it was all over the radio. We didn't sell any records, but that song just kind of stuck. And then Cliff Burnstein found the record in an import store, called me and said he wanted to meet me. I was expecting a guy in a suit and tie with a big cigar, and Cliff looked like a homeless person – scruffy beard, curly hair, a faded T-shirt with spaghetti sauce stains on it. He took me to see Metallica at the Troubadour. He said, 'I'm gonna sign these guys, they're gonna be huge.' I said, 'Really? I mean, really?' I didn't get it. At the time it was all Journey and Foreigner and all these commercial rock bands. After Cliff said he wanted to manage me. He said, 'Keep George in the band.' I called George, but he wasn't interested."

> "GEORGE SAID A LOT ABOUT IT IN THE PRESS: 'DON'S GREEDY, HE WANTS ALL THE MONEY.' THAT'S BULLSH*T. EVEN THOUGH I NOW OWN THE BAND NAME, THE DEAL IS A FOUR-WAY SPLIT. BUT GEORGE WANTED MORE, AND I SAID, 'IT'S NOT NEGOTIABLE.'"
> **DON DOKKEN**

BRIEF ENCOUNTER WITH THE PRINCE OF DARKNESS

GEORGE: "Before Randy Rhoads got the Ozzy gig I was just a name in a hat. I was approached, but I never played an audition then. After Randy died [on 19 March 1982] I spent a month around Ozzy. I flew to England and I'd be in the wings of the stage during his shows, and I'd jam at soundchecks. Then we got to Dallas and did some rehearsals with [bassist] Don Costa and [drummer] Tommy Aldridge. We were learning the songs, just tightening it up, and then one day Ozzy and Sharon came in. I don't think he even sang anything, but I remember Sharon didn't like my guitar. It was green and black, and she nicknamed it The Booger. And Ozzy had a problem with my short hair – and at that time he was bald! Eventually we got to Hollywood and they said they had a couple more guitar players they wanted to check out, one guy in particular. They said they felt obligated to look at them because they'd promised they would. And one night I showed up near the end of the auditions and there was Jake E. Lee. I found Ozzy in the backroom and he just kind of muttered, 'Ah, we won't be needing you. Thanks, bye.' And that was the end of that. I was kind of expecting to be let down a little easier. And you know, how about a little severance pay for the month I quit my job? I had two little kids, I dedicated a month to this guy, he's got millions of dollars, and I didn't get a nickel."

DON: "George was 'The Guy'. It was down to him and Jakey. And George probably would've got the gig, but Jakey bonded with Ozzy. Years later, Ozzy and I were in a bathroom peeing together, and he said to me, 'You still got that guy George in your band? That mother*cker's

Photo: Getty Images/Jim Steinfeld/Michael Ochs Archives

crazier than I am!' I said, 'Well, I don't know what to say about that...'"

THE CLASSIC LINE UP

DON: "When we signed with Elektra [in 1982] they wanted George in the band. So did Burnstein. So it ended up with me and George and Mick, and then I found Jeff Pilson in a bar, playing in a Top 40 covers band, doing 'Little Red Corvette' with a chick singing. Jeff was out of his mind when I met him. We went back to his sh*tty apartment to talk about him joining Dokken and he whipped out some coke and started chopping it out. I said, 'No thanks.' But I liked him, liked the way he played. So that was the band. Elektra re-released the album in 1983 [as 'Breaking The Chains', by Dokken, the band], and we were up and running."

THE BREAKTHROUGH

GEORGE: "We were full of p*ss and vinegar and wanted to show the world we had what it took. We dedicated ourselves to taking it to the next level, and we managed to do that with [second album] 'Tooth And Nail' [released in 1984], which went gold pretty quickly."

DON: "People thought George wrote the music and I wrote the lyrics. Not true. I'm a guitar player. Half the songs on 'Tooth And Nail' were mine. The poppiest songs always made the singles, but we had songs that were totally heavy. I was into Saxon and all the European bands, so we had that heavy edge, which helped when we toured with Judas Priest. I could hit those big screams like Rob Halford, but I couldn't do the heavy metal type singing. I'm a more melodic singer. I didn't have that high, popular sound. The record company was pushing me to be a David Lee Roth-type frontman, running around and doing the splits. But that's not my gig at all, and when Cliff Burnstein said that to Elektra it changed their minds. By that time, Def Leppard had sold six million albums. That was his power."

GEORGE: "If you have to give one element of the machine the most credit for the success that Dokken had, it would be Cliff Burnstein and [his management company alongside Peter Mensch] Q-Prime. These guys got us on radio and MTV, on these giant tours, and in all the magazines. So we owed our success to them. And to Don's bullsh*t and perseverance, and maybe some of our talent and chemistry as well."

Dokken
The New Single
BURNING LIKE A FLAME
7" · 4-Track 12"
+ 3-Track 12" Picture Disc containing previously unreleased track
On Tour with AC/DC
LONDON, Wembley Arena – SOLD OUT 12th March
Plus EXTRA DATE – 13th April
BIRMINGHAM, NEC – SOLD OUT 17th March
Plus EXTRA DATE – 7th March
The Album BACK FOR THE ATTACK
LP · Cassette · CD

THE DRUG PROBLEM

DON: "If somebody invites you over for a three-day Jack Daniel's and cocaine binge, and you don't go, you're the odd man out. Everybody was doing it but me. Alcoholics and drug addicts hang out together. The problem was, the three of them would get an ounce of cocaine and go off someplace, and I'd go to my apartment and write my songs."

GEORGE: "We had our little clique because we were partying together. Don wasn't."

THE ENIGMA OF GEORGE

GEORGE: "I loved what we did with [third album] 'Under Lock And Key' [released in 1985]. We evolved again from 'Tooth And Nail'. The sound of that album is so cool, and 'Unchain The Night' is such a great track. 'Under Lock And Key' was our first platinum record, and was the best we ever made."

DON: "I believed that if we had success, if we had money, then George would be happy. But as I said to Mick, 'It seems like the more famous we get, the more unhappy George is.' It was the oddest thing I've ever seen in my life. When I met George he had a Ford Pinto station wagon and he was sleeping in the back of it with his girlfriend. That's how far down he was. He had nowhere to go but up. But even when we sold a million records he still wasn't happy. And in that moment I realised this had nothing to do with me. I couldn't take it personally."

THE FIGHT

DON: "Touring with AC/DC in 1988, it was a thrill for me. But when we got to London I got into a fight with George. We were arguing in the back of a limo and I said, 'Let's get out to the parking lot and just get this over with. And one of us is gonna go to the hospital.' George was pretty buff, strong, a big guy, but I'd been doing martial arts since I was 12. I told him, 'If you hit me,

you're probably gonna knock me out. But if I get up, you better run.' We went at it, but then the manager came out and said, 'Guys, you're on in 10 minutes.' So we just stopped and went, 'OK!' It's funny, looking back at it."

THE 1988 US MONSTERS OF ROCK TOUR

DON: "It was such a great bill – Van Halen, Scorpions, Dokken, Metallica and Kingdom Come. My dream had come true. We had 100,000 people in a stadium and my name's behind me on a 40-foot banner. I thought I'd won the lottery. But on that tour, the drug thing had gotten way out of hand. I've never done coke in my life, and I said, 'Somebody's gonna die.' On that tour we should have been going out there and kicking it, but the bottom line was: we sucked. After a couple of shows going on after Metallica, we dropped every hit we had. I was like, 'Let's just do all our heavy sh*t, man, 'cos we're getting our butts kicked.' It's the truth. No point clouding it."

GEORGE: "The difficulty for me was knowing that Don was planning to break the band up. Our contract with Elektra was up for renegotiation, and that's when you score. We had an upward trajectory of sales, and if Elektra wanted to keep us we would've gotten paid real well. That's what those 10 years of work was for – that payoff. Don was planning on stealing that payoff from the three of us and taking it for himself. And we were told all this before we went on the Monsters Of Rock tour. I was devastated. I do what I do out of passion and conviction, and if you take that away, I'm just a guy playing the notes to get a paycheck. Before, I was trying to prove to the world that we were a tight band, that we were unique, and were destined to make a mark in the musical universe, a band that'd stand the test of time and get better and better. And when you take all that away, I had no incentive. So I was just standing up there in front of the biggest crowds we ever played in front of, and I was just going through the motions. I remember Eddie Van Halen asking me, 'What's wrong with you? Where's that fire, dude?' But I didn't want to explain it to him."

Dokken
· ON TOUR ·
WITH ACCEPT
APRIL
Tuesday 1st – DUBLIN, SFX Hall
Wednesday 2nd – BELFAST, Ulster Hall
Saturday 5th – LONDON, Hammersmith Odeon
Sunday 6th – BRISTOL, Hippodrome
Monday 7th – BIRMINGHAM, Odeon
Tuesday 8th – MANCHESTER, Apollo
Thursday 10th – EDINBURGH, Playhouse
Friday 11th – NEWCASTLE, Mayfair
ALSO AVAILABLE:
· THE ALBUM ·
'UNDER LOCK AND KEY'

DON: "Monsters Of Rock should have been the pinnacle of our career, but George was doing everything in his power to throw the band under the bus. I don't know why. I'm not a psychiatrist. I was so distraught I started drinking heavily, and I was taking Valium because I was having anxiety attacks. We could have been a huge band and I couldn't figure out what I could do to make the other guys see the folly of being self-destructive. Everybody was getting high and thinking no matter how much they misbehaved I would never leave because that would be crazy. But that's when I left the band, after that tour. At the last Monsters Of Rock, I said, 'I can't play with you any more, George. Not for any price.'"

THE SPLIT IN 1989

DON: "When I lost the band name that was the final straw. We were incorporated, like most bands. They said, 'You quit, and if you quit the company you lose the company.' I didn't quit. I told them I couldn't go on with George. It was a 'he said, she said' one-year court battle. The judge said, 'Dokken, Don Dokken, what's the difference?' He was 70, he had no idea. I said, 'Your honour, people associate with an entity: Dokken.' But I lost, and when I went out as Don Dokken it was a disaster, even though I had a supergroup with Peter Baltes [Accept], John Norum [Europe] and Mikkey Dee [King Diamond]. People gravitate to a thing, not a person. So it was tough. Jeff tried to have a solo career, which failed, and Mick went off with George in Lynch Mob."

GEORGE: "It was an equal four-way split in Lynch Mob. We found a great singer with Oni [Logan], and we had a real chemistry while it lasted."

DON: "They had good singers in Lynch Mob – Oni Logan and then Robert Mason. Robert's a nice guy. I asked him, 'What was it like being in Lynch Mob? He said, 'George was very physical. I couldn't stay.' I said, 'I hear you, bro.'"

THE COMEBACK

DON: "In the end it was kind of inevitable that I got the call: 'We wanna get the band back together.' [Famous A&R guru] John Kalodner was at Columbia Records and offered us a deal, but he insisted, 'We want the classic line-up.' So we did the 'Dysfunctional' record [released in 1995] and we got the Bon Jovi tour, and then it all went to sh*t. George was playing up and got us kicked off that tour, and Columbia dropped us like a hot potato. I said to Kalodner: 'Well, there you go, John. We just wasted a great record and a year and a half of my life.'"

THE FALLOUT

DON: "We carried on for another album [1997's 'Shadowlife'], but I really wasn't involved in it. I'd just had enough. George and Jeff thought we should get into that grunge kind of thing, and I was totally against it. They rejected most of my songs. I wrote lyrics and melodies to fit the strange, experimental, nonsensical music they'd come up with, but I knew the album was crap. 'Dysfunctional' sold 400,000 records out of the gate, and 'Shadowlife' sold 50,000. People said, 'What is this sh*t? It's not Dokken.' But George said, 'This is the perfect record, because it's the end of Dokken and that's what I wanted to accomplish.'"

GEORGE: "I would never say that. I had no intention of quitting Dokken. I was hopeful that we could evolve and get to a better place. But in the end I was fired."

DON: "We did a big tour with Alice Cooper [in 1997] and had separate tour buses. Whatever it took."

GEORGE: "We finished the Alice Cooper tour and I got

Dokken photographed on 29 January 1985 in Chicago. L-R: Don Dokken (vocals), Jeff Pilson (bass), Mick Brown (drums), George Lynch (guitar). Note Don and George keeping a healthy distance from each other

a fax telling me I was fired. No explanation, just a cold, one-sentence statement. I was owed money, but later I got a letter saying if I wanted to get paid I had to sue them. Oh, great…"

THE UNANSWERABLE QUESTION

DON: "Every year I get the same offer – a ton of money for a new Dokken record with Mick, Jeff and George. The thing is, I don't need the money."

GEORGE: "A while back we had an attempt at getting together that seemed to make sense for everybody. But at the end of the day, Don feels he should get the lion's share of the money and the rest of us don't matter as much. That was always a problem and will always be a problem."

DON: "George said a lot about it in the press: 'Don's greedy, he wants all the money.' That's bullsh*t. Even though I now own the band name, the deal is a four-way split. But George wanted more, and I said, 'It's not negotiable.' The last time we discussed the idea of a new record, George was talking about System Of A Down. Not my cup of tea. I said, 'You've gone in a completely different direction to me. It's a waste of time.' So that's it. He put the blame on me. But honestly, I just don't care."

GEORGE: "For 20 years I've been thinking, 'If all parties grew up a little bit, we could come together and do something fun and good.' It's that simple. I'm not pointing fingers. I'm as much to blame as anyone else. Dokken had more success that anything else I've done in my life, so maybe there is something there. But I've now got to the point where it's an unanswerable question."

THE BEST OF ENEMIES

DON: "People say to me even now, 'Don, you're famous for being an asshole and a prima donna, a control freak.' That was my reputation, because George was putting it out there. But after all this time, I have nothing against George. He's not a bad guy. Honestly, I feel sorry for him. You know, Van Gogh cut off his ear…"

> "WE FINISHED THE ALICE COOPER TOUR IN 1997 AND I GOT A FAX TELLING ME I WAS FIRED. NO EXPLANATION, JUST A COLD, ONE-SENTENCE STATEMENT. I WAS OWED MONEY, BUT LATER I GOT A LETTER SAYING IF I WANTED TO GET PAID I HAD TO SUE THEM. OH, GREAT…"
> **GEORGE LYNCH**

GEORGE: "We are definitely different animals, Don and I. We really aren't meant for each other. In any band there are complicated, triangulated emotions. Egos. And Don's ego was just gigantic. He built himself up and tried to crush everybody else. He had to be the absolute alpha male top dog. And I guess my lack of diplomacy didn't help. I didn't have the patience or I wasn't mature enough to really think before I said something. I would just say things that were true, but probably pretty hurtful."

THE LEGACY

DON: "I've seen so many amazing bands – bands I think were way better than Dokken – and they didn't make it. Why not? Who knows? Fate? We had talent, but I still say we were in the right place at the right time. With the success we had, I'd say it was 50 per cent luck."

GEORGE: "I'll try to be as fair as possible. I don't know that Don had a vision, and I don't think he naturally was going to be the singer that we wanted him to be – that would have made the band as great as it could have been. But when the band was at its peak, Don was the best he ever was. That came from us all working together. I'm not saying that in a derogatory way. It was the same for me. I was under a lot of pressure in that band, and it was what I needed to be the best I could be."

DON: "We weren't The Beatles. Not all our albums were great. We just wrote some catchy songs. But the sales are nearly 20 million worldwide. It's not like a Bon Jovi or a Metallica, but if 20 million people enjoy my music, that's a pretty big honour."

Photo: Getty Images/Paul Natkin

OVERLOOKED

Armored Saint photographed in Chicago, 9 February 1985.
L-R: John Bush (vocals), Joey Vera (bass), Dave Prichard (guitar)
Gonzo Sandoval (drums), Phil Sandoval (guitar)

Photo: Getty Images/Paul Natkin

KEEP THE FAITH!

Armored Saint could – perhaps *should* – have been up there with Metallica and Anthrax as leaders of the 1980s heavy metal revival. Somehow it didn't happen, though, and the Saint remain an underground phenomenon. *Dave Ling* talks to frontman **John Bush** and bassist **Joey Vera** and finds them refreshingly free of bitterness and still loving the music...

NONE OF ARMORED SAINT can recall exactly who christened them 'the headbangingest band in Los Angeles'. But marooned amid the hairspray, Spandex, mascara and sleaze of the mid-1980s Sunset Strip scene there was no more fitting epithet. One look at the band in their '80s pomp – wearing chainmail onstage – and you couldn't help but know that this was a *heavy metal* band.

"Back then Armored Saint played with RATT, Black 'N Blue, Steeler, W.A.S.P. and Great White, but we always sounded a little different," frontman John Bush explains proudly. "What set us apart was that we wanted to be British or European. The bands that inspired us were Thin Lizzy, UFO, Judas Priest and the Scorpions, then eventually Iron Maiden and Motörhead. All those other LA bands were tamer than us – and also a little bit glammier."

ARMORED SAINT'S story began in the late '70s in junior high school when siblings Phil and Gonzo Sandoval (lead guitar and drums respectively) joined forces with Bush and bassist Joey Vera in a covers band known as Royal Decree. The band morphed into something more professional when Bush moved to South Pasadena High School and hitched up with guitarist Dave Prichard. It was Gonzo Sandoval who came up with the Armored Saint name after going to see the 1981 sword and sorcery movie *Excalibur.* Joey Vera, who wasn't a band member at the time, still recalls witnessing the band's debut show with a different bass player.

"Armored Saint played their first ever gig during a lunch break at South Pasadena High," he chuckles. "They played 'Hollywood (Down On Your Luck)' by Thin Lizzy and Sammy Hagar's 'There's Only One Way To Rock'. I also saw another gig of theirs at an all-girl Catholic high school, which was totally appropriate. Dave Prichard was in my ear telling me to join them, but I was in this other band. Then in the spring of '82 I finally saw sense."

The Sandovals are of ►

OVERLOOKED

Dave Prichard, Gonzo Sandoval and Joey Vera. The emotional connection has always been deep and strong

The Saint's vocalist John Bush photographed in 1990, having already left the breastplate behind

Mexican descent, while Vera is half-Mexican. This shared cultural heritage made the band a tight unit. Living within a quarter-mile radius of each other in El Sereno, East LA also helped the five members cement firm friendships and loyalties.

AFTER SCHLEPPING around Hollywood's club circuit for a while, things took a turn for the better when rock entrepreneur Brian Slagel of Metal Blade Records caught a gig at the Troubadour and told the band he wanted them on his label. Sure enough, when Danish band Mercyful Fate pulled out of their allotted slot on volume two of the 'Metal Massacre' sampler album series, Slagel handed Armored Saint a prime opening spot on the record, which the band filled with the track 'Lesson Well Learned'. In the summer of '83 the same song emerged on a three-song Metal Blade EP, effectively culled from a demo made while the band was particularly f*cked up.

"As 18 or 19-year-old kids we'd scored some opium and had several mini-kegs of beer when we recorded, but that first demo came out amazingly well," Bush laughs. "In a roundabout way it came from a car accident that Joey Vera had with Tommy Lee after an Armored Saint gig. Tommy and Joey were friends and had been in a band together before he was in Armored Saint. Joey's hands were cut up in the crash and the insurance settlement from that accident paid for the recording."

The EP generated major label interest and Chrysalis Records signed Armored Saint in 1984. The band still handled their own affairs and had less than 50 gigs under their belts. They quickly hired a professional manager, Cliff Burnstein of Q Prime. Burnstein and his partner, Peter Mensch, had just taken on Def Leppard and would later represent metal heavyweights including Metallica, Dokken and the Scorpions. The bearded, scarecrow-haired Burnstein might not have looked like a high-powered executive, but he provided wise counsel. One of the first things he told his new charges was that they'd signed the wrong record deal.

"Cliff once came to a meeting at Joey's house in Pasadena with a grocery bag as his briefcase. He looked like a homeless person," Bush marvels. "Right at the start he told us, 'I hate Chrysalis!' and we had to tell him that we'd just signed to them. That didn't make us feel too optimistic."

> "CHRYSALIS FELT THAT WE MIGHT HAVE BEEN THEIR EQUIVALENT OF DEF LEPPARD. THEY WANTED US TO BE A COMMERCIALISED HEAVY METAL BAND, WHICH OF COURSE WE WEREN'T."
> **JOEY VERA**

Despite Burnstein's reservations about Chrysalis and their lack of experience in breaking metal bands, the group were much more forgiving. "We were just happy to be on the same label as UFO, Jethro Tull and Robin Trower," Vera says. "They were very patient with us," agrees Bush. "After a few years we still hadn't had any hits, and Chrysalis still allowed us to make a third record."

BUT THAT'S jumping ahead. For their debut album Chrysalis hooked Armored Saint up with Michael James Jackson, the producer who'd worked with Kiss on 1982's 'Creatures Of The Night' and 1983's 'Lick It Up' albums. Known for delivering a more commercial style of music, the producer was a little standoffish in the studio and Bush and Vera agree that despite the quality of songs such as 'Can U Deliver', 'Take A Turn' and 'Seducer', 'March Of The Saint' is a flawed album. In her *Kerrang!* review at the time Sylvie Simmons noted that the production "could have been a little more butch".

"Chrysalis felt that we might have been their

Photos: Getty Images/The LIFE Picture Collection

equivalent of Def Leppard, whose 'Pyromania' album was going through the roof," Vera believes. "They had all of these huge Top 40 artists like Huey Lewis & The News, Spandau Ballet and Pat Benatar, and they wanted us to be a commercialised heavy metal band, which of course we weren't."

"I still see Armored Saint as a glorified garage band, because that's how we began," says Bush. "Michael James Jackson was a questionable choice in the first place, and partly because he was going through some personal problems he failed to capture the grittiness of our band. The experience cost us something like $350,000, but it was out of our hands."

In keeping with their developing image, 'March Of The Saint' featured a cover illustration of five knights in gleaming armour, with shields and maces, standing in front of a Medieval castle. Before the injection of Chrysalis cash the band had made their own outfits along such lines, but now they upgraded their props.

"We knew a store that supplied the Hollywood studios, so the breast plate I wore had been in a movie called *The Beastmaster*," Bush relates. "I remember Joey stealing those reflective objects from street poles that were meant to prevent people from crashing and attaching them to his chainmail breast plate. We were trying to make ourselves stand out against our rivals."

The problem was that the armour was uncomfortable and sweaty to wear, and with the rise of thrash metal bands like Metallica and Anthrax who simply favoured jeans, T-shirts and high-top trainers, Bush admits that the look became "a slight albatross" and gradually it was phased out. "I can still look back at that whole era with a slight snicker, though, and I'm not embarrassed about it at all," he stresses.

A PACKAGE tour of North America at first saw Metallica and Armored Saint opening for W.A.S.P., before Metallica's mushrooming popularity saw James Hetfield and company promoted to top dogs during the first few months of 1985. 'March Of The Saint', released in October 1984, sold almost 150,000 copies in the States within 12 months. And while not exactly setting the world ablaze, that nevertheless represented a pretty decent start. "Had the record not cost $350,000 to make we would never have ended up in the giant hole in which we found ourselves," Bush reflects.

However, instead of banging out a simple, hard-hitting follow-up to emphasise their strengths, Armored Saint opted to push the envelope with 1985's 'Delirious Nomad'. It was an album that saw the band introduce an experimental edge to the likes of 'Aftermath', 'In The Hole' and 'Over The Edge'. Dave Prichard owned up to *Kerrang!*'s Howard Johnson that the group's new music "wasn't as instant" as the debut, though the guitarist did joke: "It grows on you – like mould." But after apparently being stifled by Jackson on the debut release, Ozzy Osbourne producer Max Norman felt a much better fit.

"Almost as a knee-jerk response to our experiences on 'March Of The Saint' we stretched out when we got back into the studio," comments Vera. "We went from a producer we didn't really see eye to eye with, to Max, who was great. It's true, though, that we ended up making a completely different type of record to 'March Of The Saint'. I've only recently realised that every single record we've made lives on its own island and, of course, that's been to our detriment. 'Delirious Nomad' was a super-dark record, both sonically and song-wise."

Guitarist Phil Sandoval left the band during the recording of the album and that only increased the sombre mood of the sessions. Joey remembers that Dave Prichard – at that point the Saint's *de facto* leader – had been reading the Led Zeppelin biography *Hammer Of The Gods*. As Sandoval's partying habits accelerated, the guitarist convinced his bandmates they should become a four-piece.

"For us to let Gonzo's brother go during the recording definitely led to some turmoil and friction," Bush recounts with a rueful chortle. "Phil later returned to the band and he apologised to us for what went down back then."

ALMOST TWO years would pass before the trimmed down Saint released album number three, mainly thanks to the enduring belief of Ron Fair, the executive who first brought Armored Saint to Chrysalis. August 1987's 'Raising Fear' was made with another producer, Chris Minto, and is a great piece of work, despite having its imperfections.

"I don't like the fact that I'm singing so high," Bush rues. "At times it sounds like I've been inhaling helium. And it was made in two segments, which was strange. But in amongst the confusion it still had some awesome tracks."

Chrysalis had insisted that the band try working with an outside songwriter, so the band got together with Phil Brown, a former touring musician with Little Feat. But when Brown began voicing the label's desire for the group to record 'Wishing Well' by Free, Armored Saint called time on the arrangement, though they did reluctantly agree to choose a cover song themselves for 'Raising Fear' – Lynyrd Skynyrd's 'Saturday Night Special'.

Three albums in and still with no sign of a major breakthrough, the band felt they were in the last chance saloon. They vowed to try to change things by getting out on the road and staying there for as long as possible. Even when the label stopped coughing up tour support, Armored Saint were prepared to travel in a van rather than a tour bus. There were some headline shows, a run of dates with Grim Reaper and Helloween billed as 'Hell On Wheels', and opening slots with Alice Cooper, the Michael Schenker Group and Ted Nugent.

"Staying out on the road was hard work and the record did OK," says Bush. "We still had a name and people in the heavy metal world still knew of us, of course. ►

OVERLOOKED

But we were aware that we were declining a little bit with each record, so it was no surprise when Chrysalis finally dropped us."

There comes a time when every brave knight needs his faithful white stallion, of course, and at this point Brian Slagel re-entered the picture, welcoming Armored Saint back to their original independent home, Metal Blade Records. 'Saints Will Conquer' – a live album recorded at the Agora Ballroom in Cleveland – appeared in 1988, featuring a bonus track, 'No Reason To Live', which was the final unreleased track from the group's original demo. Though it overlooked many of the band's early numbers, the album did provide an important impetus to the group's flagging career.

"We had no intention of staying with Metal Blade," Vera clarifies. "We were still looking for another major label deal, which as it turned out never came along. 'Saints Will Conquer' was thrown together to keep the band's name out there, really."

"It's strange to look back and realise that I was only 25 years old when we got dropped," adds Bush. "It felt like such a hammer blow and people were telling us, 'You guys are done!' But we were still young whippersnappers."

Armored Saint guitarist Dave Prichard, who sadly died of leukaemia in 1990

DESPITE THE difficult situation Armored Saint found themselves in, they were about to make the album that many consider their defining statement. Having beefed up to a five-piece once more with the addition of rhythm guitarist Jeff Duncan, the band began writing their fourth album. Duncan had been with the LA-based band Odin, who'd made a memorable appearance in Penelope Spheeris' car-crash documentary of the hair-metal scene *The Decline Of Western Civilization Part II: The Metal Years*. Odin had been filmed in a hot tub as their singer Randy O predicted that his then-unsigned band members were destined to become millionaires. Yet Duncan turned out to be a great fit and remains a valued member of Armored Saint to this day.

To everyone's horror, guitarist Dave Prichard was then diagnosed with leukaemia and after a very short battle with the disease died in February 1990. Given how tight the band members were, it was a devastating blow. A rehabilitated Phil Sandoval returned to the fold and the band hired Dave Jerden, a producer best known for his work with Alice In Chains and Jane's Addiction, for what would become 'Symbol Of Salvation'. As a tribute to Prichard the song 'Tainted Past' featured a guitar solo he'd demoed for the song in an early incarnation.

1991's 'Symbol Of Salvation' didn't give Armored Saint the chart recognition they wanted, but all the same it was greeted by rave reviews across the board. The band finally made it to the UK for a now-legendary gig at the Marquee Club on 22 May 1991, reviewed in *Kerrang!* magazine by *Rock Candy Mag*'s Xavier Russell. "The Saint came, the Saint saw and the Saint conquered," Russell reported, adding: "It's only taken them 10 years to get here, but it was well worth the wait."

John Bush's greatest regret is that fact that Armored Saint didn't tour Europe until 'Symbol Of Salvation'. "Not setting foot on English soil until 1991 was a huge mistake, and it's one that we're still a little sour about," he says. "Had we done so earlier, I know for sure that Armored Saint would have become a much bigger and more popular band. We were tailor-made for British and European audiences."

> "WE STILL HAD A NAME AND PEOPLE IN THE HEAVY METAL WORLD STILL KNEW OF US. BUT WE WERE AWARE THAT WE WERE DECLINING A LITTLE BIT WITH EACH RECORD, SO IT WAS NO SURPRISE WHEN CHRYSALIS FINALLY DROPPED US."
> **JOHN BUSH**

ALAS, IT was all too little, too late. Anthrax had already contacted Bush once before about replacing their singer Joey Belladonna, but when they came calling a second time, in 1992, the vocalist was forced to reconsider the offer. After a long and emotional phone conversation with Joey Vera ("I told John this was something he needed to do or he'd end up resenting us all," reveals the bassist) Bush realised it was time to move on.

"It probably sounds a little hokey, but the inter-band relationship went back so far that I felt I was leaving them all holding the bag when I joined Anthrax," John sighs. "We'd done another tour in a van to promote 'Symbol Of Salvation' and that made for some miserable times. Not everyone agreed, but deep in my heart I knew it was time to stop and do something else."

Bush's decision prompted resentment. Without naming names Vera reveals, "For some of us, John's exit caused sourness that lasted for maybe up to a year."

Bush went on to make four original studio albums with Anthrax. Despite the New Yorkers experiencing their own period of turmoil Bush produced some great work, most notably 1993's 'Sound Of White Noise'.

During a hiatus six years later, however, and with Vera then guesting with Anthrax, the pair couldn't resist

Photo: Getty Images/The LIFE Picture Collection

reconvening the Armored Saint 'Symbol Of Salvation' line-up, and the 'Revelation' album duly appeared in 2000. Although Bush would briefly re-join Anthrax, his time with them effectively ended in 2005 when Belladonna returned for a much-anticipated reunion of the classic Anthrax line-up, completed by Scott Ian, Dan Spitz, Frank Bello and Charlie Benante.

Since 'Revelation' Armored Saint have made two further studio albums (2010's 'La Raza' and 2015's 'Win Hands Down'), as well as releasing a 2001 oddities set titled 'Nod To The Old School' and a 2017 live album, 'Carpe Noctum'. They are still on Metal Blade Records and continue to gig and make new music. At the time of writing, a 10th studio set is being prepared with a view to recording beginning at the start of November, with a release date pencilled in for the spring of 2020.

ARMORED SAINT'S longevity and its band members' loyalty to the group are all the more remarkable considering the fact that during the early-to-mid-1980s John Bush and Joey Vera both received overtures to join Metallica, the former when they were considering adding a lead singer and the latter as a replacement for Cliff Burton after the bassist's untimely death in 1986. They both decided not to pursue those options, preferring to keep faith with their own group.

"I always say that had I joined Metallica I'd have single-handedly ruined the course of heavy metal," Bush laughs. "That was not my fate and I have no regrets."

"We must all be crazy!" agrees Joey. "This is a band that's done its own thing from day one – but it's *our* thing. And that freedom to express oneself is what inspires any artist, whether they've sold a million records or just 10."

When I saw Armored Saint playing in a small club in London – Camden's The Underworld – back in 2016, the sheer sense of togetherness and commitment they showed was every bit as heart-warming as the group's musical performance.

"It's hard not to sound sappy about this, but one of the joys of Armored Saint is that it's still same guys, not two of us plus a bunch of younger replacements," Bush concludes. "And you know what? If Dave [Prichard] were still here we'd simply have to go down the Lynyrd Skynyrd route and have three guitarists! Our emotional connection is that deep and that strong."

CAN THEY DELIVER?

Here's *Rock Candy Mag*'s choice of the six very best Saint songs…

'MARCH OF THE SAINT'
(From 'March Of The Saint', 1984)
Disregard the slick production and instead savour the pageantry and majesty of the introductory overture, before the first track of the debut album kicks into life with a powerful riff. 'March Of The Saint' is meat and potatoes metal delivered 1980s-style with the flamboyance of a band clearly trying to stand out from the crowd.

'CAN U DELIVER?'
(From 'March Of The Saint', 1984)
Armored Saint was never a thrash band, though this powerhouse number reminds us why they stood their ground on bills with the likes of Metallica, Testament and Exodus. John Bush was always an authoritative frontman and he sells this song as though his life depends on it.

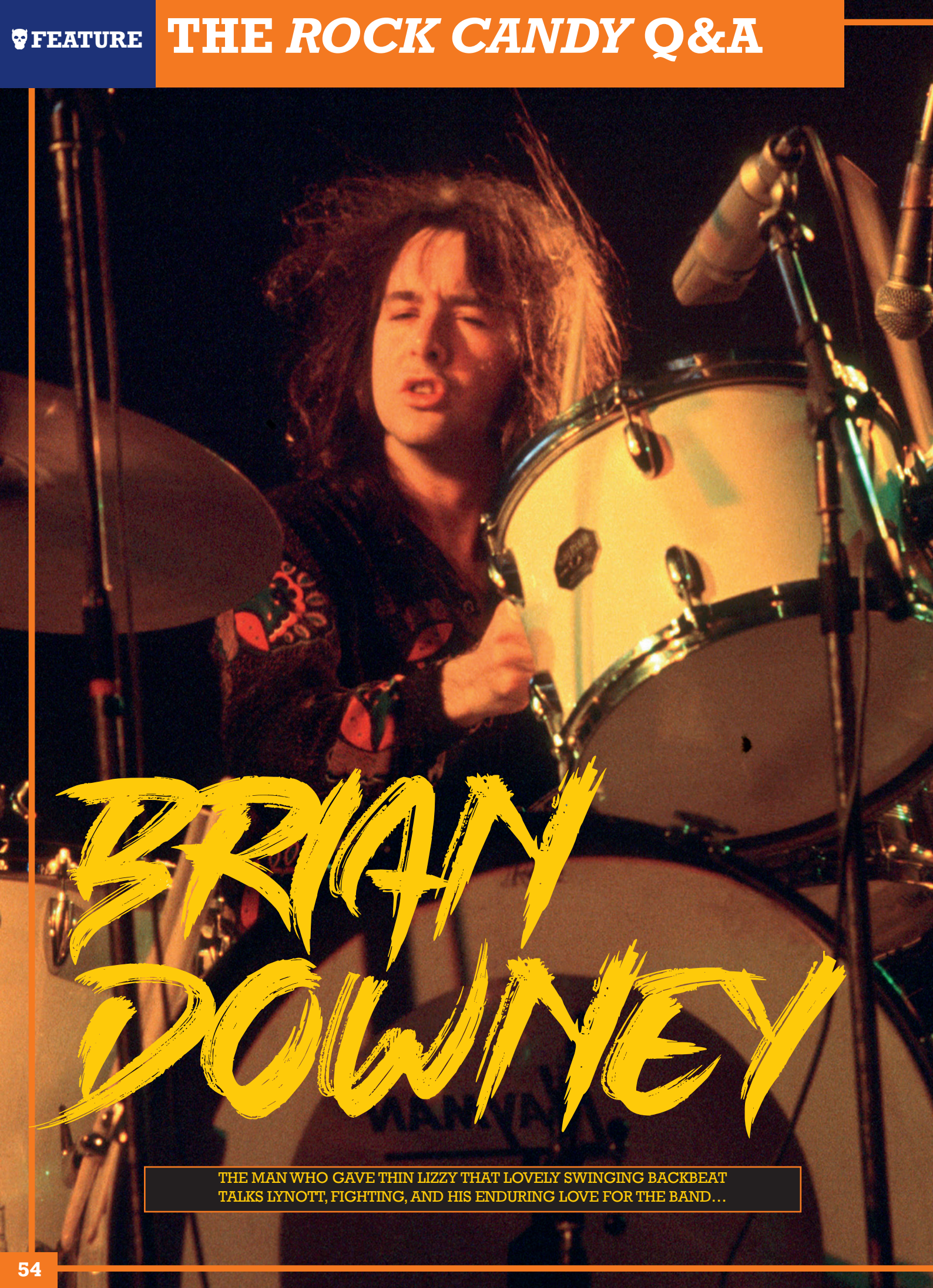
'AFTERMATH'
(From 'Delirious Nomad', 1985)
The band opted to mix things up a little with second album 'Delirious Nomad', experimenting with tempos and accentuating the light and shade of their writing. At more than five minutes long, 'Aftermath' is just one example of AS's ability to write tunes that conjure several different moods within a single framework.

'RAISING FEAR'
(From 'Raising Fear', 1987)
A track from the band's days as a four-piece, 'Raising Fear' kicked off the third album of the same name with a seemingly futuristic paean to an attacker in ruthless pursuit of his victim. "*No one hears you/ Then you disappear/ Warn with a threat,*" sings Bush in this delightful high-energy, balls-out display of heavy metal-ness.

'REIGN OF FIRE'
(From 'Symbol Of Salvation', 1991)
No doubt about it, 'Symbol Of Salvation' is one of the great unsung metal albums. Founded on a ferocious riff and featuring a remarkably in-your-face vocal performance from Bush, 'Reign Of Fire' is an irresistible, stomp-along anthem that rightly caused Anthrax to sit up and go, "Hmm..."

'LAST TRAIN HOME'
(From 'Symbol Of Salvation', 1991)
Armored Saint can also do melody too... and in a big way. The gentle pace of the verse here lulls the listener into a false sense of security, before a chorus deploys its muddy size 12s to kick down the door, trample all over the living room rug and depart in five minutes and 19 seconds flat.

THE *ROCK CANDY* Q&A



BRIAN DOWNEY

THE MAN WHO GAVE THIN LIZZY THAT LOVELY SWINGING BACKBEAT TALKS LYNOTT, FIGHTING, AND HIS ENDURING LOVE FOR THE BAND…

You first met Philip Lynott at the school you both attended. Can you tell us about that connection?
"We weren't in class together because I was two years younger than Phil, so at first I just knew him as the only black guy in the school. But I soon began hearing about his band The Black Eagles and went to see them at a youth club called St Paul's Hall where they played every Friday night. Phil really, really impressed me and my band ended up supporting them for about six months before he told me there would be a vacancy, but that I'd have to audition. Still, I had no fear back then... The first tune we played together was 'You Really Got Me' by The Kinks. It went well, so I joined The Black Eagles and there was no looking back."

The story goes that Thin Lizzy were annoyed when what would become a signature tune, 'Whisky In The Jar', was released as a single in 1972. Is that true?
"Yeah. Phil had a song called 'Black Boys On The Corner' that we really liked. When it came to a B-side our attitude was almost, 'Let's throw anything together'. 'Whisky...' was just one of those tunes that Eric Bell and Phil used to play in the folk clubs, so we were incredulous when Dick Rowe at Decca insisted it had to be the A-side. Dick might've been the guy who'd turned down The Beatles, but on this occasion he was proven correct."

Was Lizzy's reputation for drinking, drugging and fighting a fair one?
"Well it's pretty accurate, though drinking was far more prevalent, especially in the early days. A bit of hashish crept in at the start too, so it was a mix of those two. For quite a while hash and pints of Guinness were our staple diet. The fighting came later – when Robbo was in the band!"

Who was your favourite lead guitar player to work with in Lizzy and why?
"Oh God, that's so difficult. The albums we made for Decca and the ones that we recorded for Phonogram are like chalk and cheese. If you push me, though, then I'd have to pick Eric Bell above the rest. Gary Moore would be my second favourite, then Brian Robertson three, and Scott Gorham four."

Can you rank your top three favourite Lizzy albums?
"For my own taste my favourites are the first three we made for Decca, especially the first one, 'Thin Lizzy'. After that 'Jailbreak' would have to be right up there, and then there's 'Chinatown'."

Do you feel the soulful quality of Phil's voice is often overlooked?
"I couldn't agree more. He had such an incredible melodic tone. That was there right from when I used to see him at St Paul's Hall. He was always such an emotive singer. That's definitely been overlooked, as has his stage presence. Phil was powerfully charismatic. Even before he took up the bass he would be on stage, dressed all in black with a black glove holding the microphone. You just couldn't take your eyes off him."

How would you describe Phil's character to someone who never knew him? Was he mild unless riled?
"That's exactly right. If he overheard a racial slur then there would be trouble. He was the only black guy in the school, as I said, so he had to stand up for himself. But otherwise he was always very mild-mannered."

It's been speculated that Thin Lizzy's farewell tour began as a press stunt that spiralled out of control. Why in your view did the band split up in '83?
"It was a mixture of the group running out of steam and running out of money, but there were a few other things that played a part too. The gigs were no longer selling out the way they had done, and Phil was writing his solo albums. Don't get me wrong, I liked his solo work. But all of a sudden he had another interest besides Lizzy, and I think he was being ground down by the constant changes of guitarists. By the end he was completely confused by it all. It's something that we spoke about. He had no idea what direction Lizzy should take. We had to accept that the band was on a downhill slope and we were getting badly into debt. That's why it was decided to end it."

"PHIL HAD ALREADY FOLDED GRAND SLAM. HE TOLD ME THAT HE'D BEEN IN TOUCH WITH ROBBO ABOUT PUTTING LIZZY BACK TOGETHER, AND I THINK HE'D ALSO ASKED SCOTT GORHAM. I SAID, 'ARE YOU SERIOUS ABOUT THIS?' AND HE REPLIED: 'SURE'. IN HIS MIND IT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN."

Is it true that Phil was intending to reform Lizzy before he died?
"That is true, yes. Phil had already folded Grand Slam and we were in a taxi together on the way to perform his solo song 'Nineteen' on a UK TV show called *Razzmatazz*. He told me that he'd been in touch with Robbo about putting Lizzy back together, and I think he'd also asked Scott Gorham. I said, 'Are you serious about this?' and he replied: 'Sure.' In his mind it was going to happen."

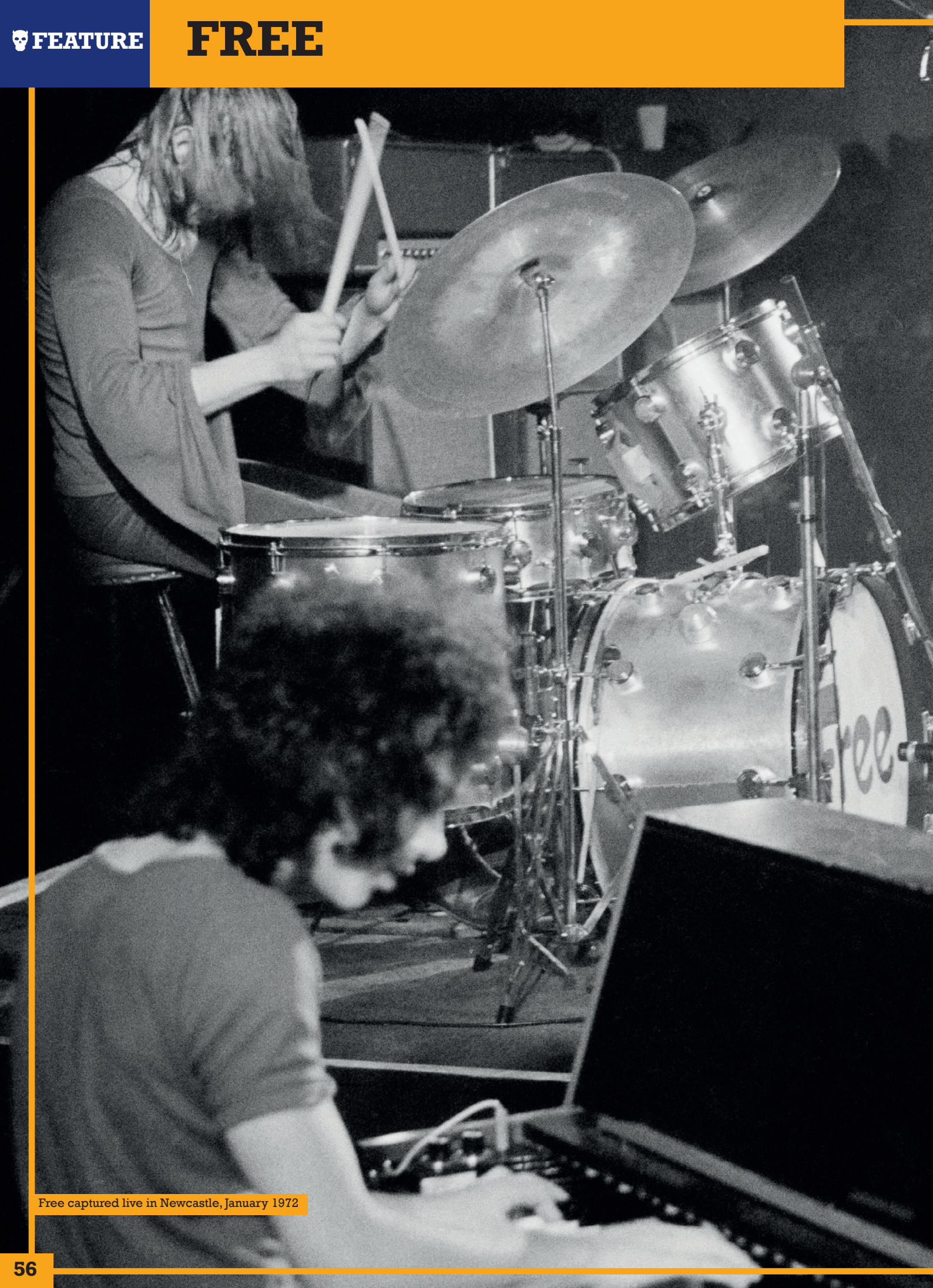
Such a shame it didn't, but the legacy lives on. And part of that is your latest band Alive And Dangerous. How was that formed?
"My original idea was to put together a band to play music for a bit of a laugh, but then the guitarist, Brian Grace, suggested we add some Lizzy numbers to keep everybody happy. Brian introduced me to a great lead guitarist called Phil Edgar and a bassist/vocalist called Matt Wilson. We soon discovered that we could play those old Lizzy songs note for note, so that's what we've been doing. We've been performing the 'Live And Dangerous' album in its entirety, and as faithfully as we possibly can."

That sounds like a real treat. Will you eventually release non-Lizzy music?
"We will at some point. We've got an album of our own demoed and ready to go, so now it's just a matter of finding a record company."

Finally Brian, are you surprised at how much affection there still is for Thin Lizzy today?
"I'm surprised, yes, and I think that Phil would be too. He'd be both surprised *and* flattered. After Grand Slam his reputation started to precede him and he had almost dropped out of the mainstream music business as we know it. So I think for him to see the place he has in rock history... well he'd have been very happy."

Interview by Dave Ling. Photo: Getty Images/Ian Dickson/Redferns

FREE



Free captured live in Newcastle, January 1972

They took the blues and turned it into something new, raw and vital, in the process becoming one of the greatest British rock bands of all time and a genuine rival to Zeppelin and the Stones. *Mick Wall* talks to surviving members, frontman **Paul Rodgers** and drummer **Simon Kirke**, about the legend that is **Free**...

FREE SPIRITS

THERE THEY STOOD IN the street. Smiling from their heads to their feet.

The occasion? The arrival into the UK Top 10, in June 1970, of Free's first big hit, 'All Right Now'. The band's drummer Simon Kirke says he knew they'd hit the big time when their record company, Island, "sent a car to take us to *Top Of The Pops*", then the nation's biggest TV pop show.

Only kept from the number one spot that summer by Mungo Jerry's asinine 'In The Summertime' – "God, I hated Mungo Jerry!" laughs Kirke – Free's now iconic anthem also propelled the band into the US *Billboard* charts for the first time, where it reached number four.

Overnight, Free went from being everybody's close-but-no-cigar second favourites to rivalling Led Zeppelin and the Rolling Stones as the biggest British band in the world.

Being Free though – "I wouldn't say we were *arrogant*," says singer Paul Rodgers, "but we certainly knew our worth" – the band took their time staring deep down the throat of this gift horse. After he'd finished "jumping up and down in the street," Kirke recalls a tortuous debate with the rest of the band – Rodgers, bassist Andy Fraser and guitarist Paul Kossoff – about whether they should actually agree to do *Top Of The Pops*.

"We saw it as a kids' show," Fraser once explained to me. "We thought going on there miming would be a little difficult to pull off."

In the end the band only agreed to do it after the show's producers allowed Rodgers to at least perform his vocals live. "We'd built up a lot of credibility," Rodgers tells me, speaking from his home in Palm Springs in the States. "I just wanted to make sure we didn't blow it all away."

"When 'All Right Now' hit, people went crazy," recalls Kirke when we talk for this piece. "But we

Photo: Getty Images/Michael Putland

FREE

Free with pot. L-R: Paul Rodgers (vocals), Andy Fraser (bass), Simon Kirke (drums), Paul Kossoff (guitar)

could back it up. We'd had two solid years on the road and already had something to show for it. We weren't the Bay City Rollers. This was a tough blues band that had already honed its chops."

THIS MUCH was true. Forged in the fires of the post-British blues boom of the mid-'60s, Free had hardened their bones on the same raggedy-arsed club and college circuit that had recently given rise to other Brit-rock titans of the era like Zeppelin, the Jeff Beck Group, Black Sabbath and Deep Purple.

In the wake of 'All Right Now' and the powerful album that birthed it, 'Fire And Water' – both of which hit number two in the UK in the summer of 1970 – Free featured prominently on the bill of the Isle Of Wight Festival at the end of August. Performing alongside The Who, The Doors and Jimi Hendrix, it looked for all the world like Free had got it made. Chased down the street by teenage girls in hot pants, given the approving nod by male fans in hippy greatcoats, drooled over in the music press as 'the new Rolling Stones', what could possibly go wrong?

And yet as Andy Fraser put it when we last spoke, not long before his sad death in 2015 from a heart attack after a long battle with AIDS, "We didn't realise it, but the success of 'All Right Now' and 'Fire And Water' was our peak. There were still some high-spots to come, musically, but basically, it was all downhill from there..."

> "WE WEREN'T AFRAID TO GO UP AGAINST ANYONE. WE WOULD LATER TOUR WITH THE WHO, SMALL FACES, FAMILY, ANYBODY, AND WE WERE STILL CONFIDENT IN EACH OTHER."
> **PAUL RODGERS**

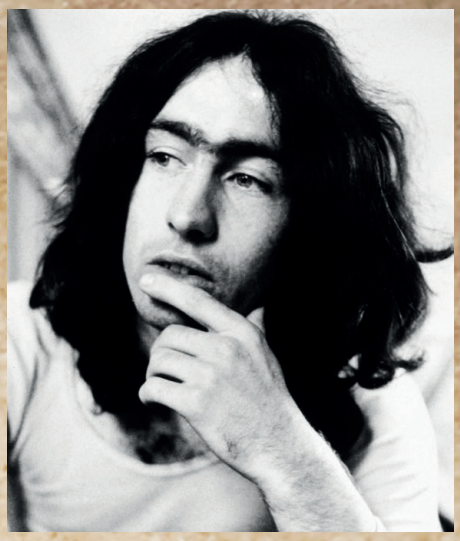
FREE WERE improbably young at the time 'All Right Now' sent the band into the commercial stratosphere. Fraser was just 17, Kossoff 19, Rodgers 20, and Kirke just shy of 21. They'd already released two albums, 'Tons Of Sobs' and 'Free', hitting the stores seven months apart in 1969. Neither album had any commercial impact.

Critically, however, Free were universally lauded. Here was a group of four virtuoso adolescents sounding like they'd already been through several previous lifetimes. Kossoff was up there as a supremely gifted lead guitarist with a sound all his own at a time when rock was over-endowed with universe-baiting guitar gods, from Jimi Hendrix to Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck to Jimmy Page and so many others. Yet Koss, as he was known, stood out from the moment his untamed guitar came kicking and screaming out of the speakers.

Kirke was another standout talent in an era that boasted some of the greatest drummers rock would ever produce. He had the power of John Bonham married to the percussive nimbleness of Ginger Baker. Musically, though, the really

heavy talent in Free was Andy Fraser. The youngest and smartest of the four, Fraser was a bassist par excellence. He was also a wonderful singer, keyboardist and songwriter. Just 15 when he joined Free, Fraser would also be the first to outgrow the band and leave. But we'll get to that...

Upfront, of course, was the magnificent Paul Rodgers, arguably the greatest rock singer of them all. Robert Plant once described Rodgers to me as "a freak of nature", referring to the fact that Paul's voice – part burnished gold, part smooth polished leather – was an otherworldly force. Or as Journey's Neal Schon told me recently, "Paul isn't like other singers who have to work at it. He just opens his mouth and this incredible sound comes out. Just the greatest voice in rock."



"WHEN 'ALL RIGHT NOW' HIT, PEOPLE WENT CRAZY, BUT WE COULD BACK IT UP. WE'D HAD TWO SOLID YEARS ON THE ROAD. WE WEREN'T THE BAY CITY ROLLERS. THIS WAS A TOUGH BLUES BAND THAT HAD ALREADY HONED ITS CHOPS."
SIMON KIRKE

IT WAS Rodgers and Fraser who became Free's principal songwriters. The fact that they were polar opposites as people was the grit in the oyster that made the pearl. "Paul was a tough, hairy Northerner, while I was a little gay boy from London," is how Fraser affectionately characterised the relationship when last we spoke. Or as Rodgers says now, "Andy and I started out as great mates, writing together, really driving things along in the band. Then things somehow got strange between us. Somewhere along the way, I kind of just... lost Andy." And with him went the band. Though not all in one go. With the four members of Free – that most defiantly individualistic creation – things were never that simple. They would put themselves through great hardships before finally calling it a day – not once, but twice – while also making music for the ages. But then none of them came from easy backgrounds. They were already battle-hardened survivors, each in their own way, even by the time they came together to play their first gig as a band at the Nag's Head pub in Battersea, South London, back in April 1968.

"There was me and Paul – the country boys of the band," says Kirke. "Then there was Andy and Koss, the city boys. Koss and Andy always had more suss than us, but it was really Paul and me that provided the guts of the band. We'd had to fight to get to London. The other two

record mirror

STEVIE WONDER
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A 'MAGIC CIRCUS' PRESENTATION

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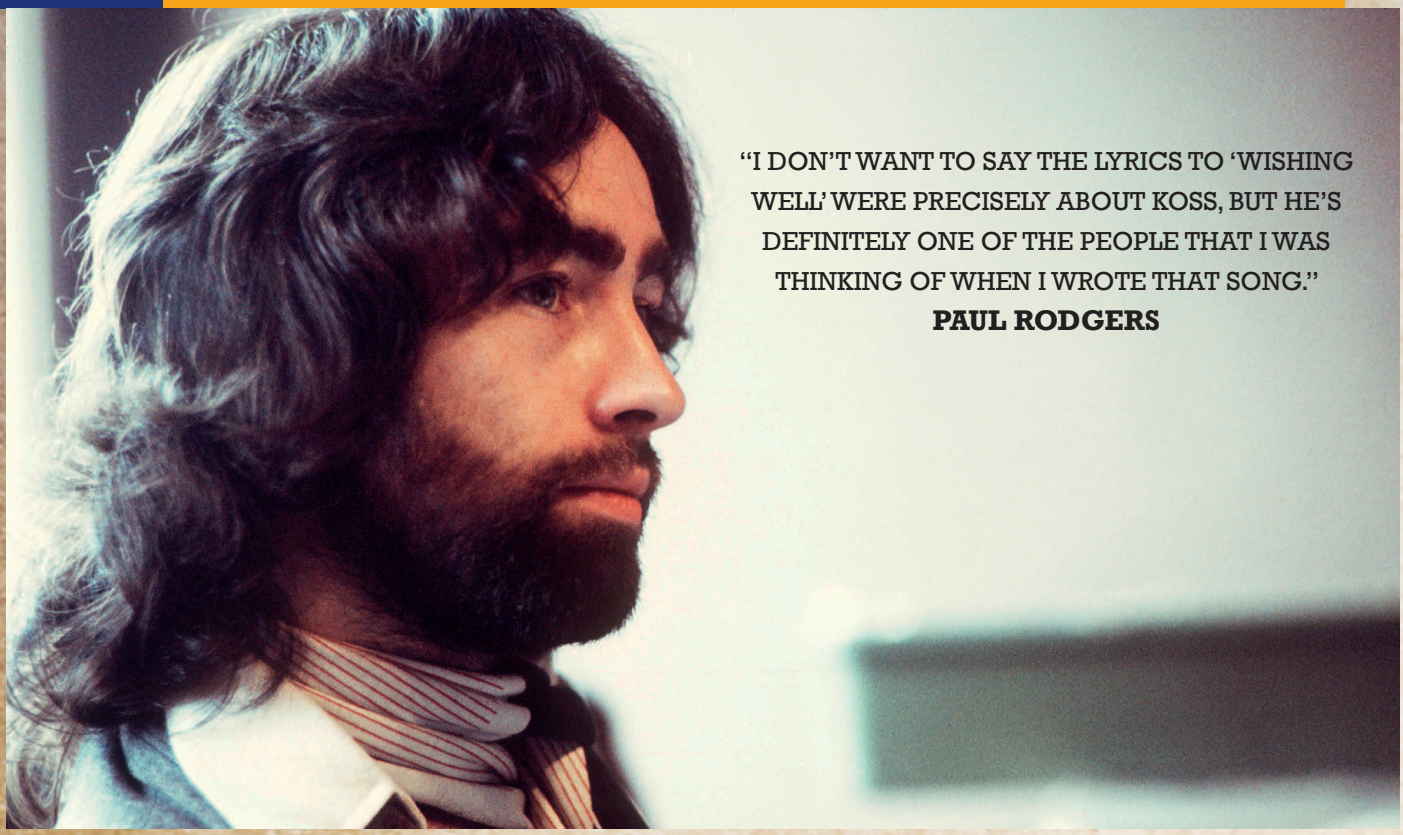
FREE



"I DON'T WANT TO SAY THE LYRICS TO 'WISHING WELL' WERE PRECISELY ABOUT KOSS, BUT HE'S DEFINITELY ONE OF THE PEOPLE THAT I WAS THINKING OF WHEN I WROTE THAT SONG."
PAUL RODGERS

had so much musical talent, but Paul and I had all the drive and determination."

RODGERS WAS the son of a hard-as-nails Middlesbrough docker and grew up competing for attention with six brothers and sisters.

"I'd be singing along to records or the radio and the voice was just there straight away. I didn't have to try very hard, it just came out that way," he chuckles. Originally the bass player in a local blues and soul outfit, The Roadrunners (also featuring future Whitesnake guitarist, Micky Moody), as soon as the other band members heard Paul's voice they made him the singer. The group changed their name to The Wildflowers, and then made the "big leap into the dark", heading down to London in their clapped-out van when Rodgers was just 18.

"We gave it a go, but this was late-'67, early '68, and London was full of amazing bands playing the clubs," remembers Rodgers. "We found it hard." When their van broke down on their way to a gig in Norwich, most of the group saw it as the last straw and decided to give up and return home. Not tough-nut Rodgers, though, who opted to hitch back to London.

"I understood why the band wanted to throw in the towel, but somehow I just knew I could do it, so why should I give up?"

He began by hastily throwing together a Chicago-style blues band he called Brown Sugar (three years before the Rolling Stones had a hit with a song of the same name), scuffling for gigs at pubs.

"Life in London was incredibly exciting as a young kid from Middlesbrough," he says. "There seemed to be music absolutely everywhere. I could hear Cream, Jimi Hendrix, The Beatles, Joe Cocker or the Stones coming out of every window."

ONE DAY Rodgers met a fellow blues enthusiast named Paul Kossoff, then working at Selmer's guitar shop on Charing Cross Road, a well-known Soho hangout for musicians, rich or broke.

"He was shy," recalls Rodgers now. "But we were the same age and we got talking. He obviously knew a lot about guitars and you could tell he had something else going about him. Something you couldn't quite put your finger on..."

Kossoff came from a completely different world to Rodgers – not just geographically but culturally, economically and educationally. Growing up in North London as the son of a famous stage and film actor, David Kossoff, Paul was the entitled, talented, yet still unhappy boy who appeared somehow doomed right from the outset.

While attending private school Paul showed that he was an accomplished swimmer and a good skier. But the young Kossoff had also acquired his first drug habit at just 14 – pep pills; speed. In an effort to get him away from the "bad crowd" he'd fallen into, his parents sent him to a nearby state school. When that didn't work out, his father took him on tour with him, playing incidental guitar during a double bill of plays, Wolf Mankowitz's *The Bespoke Overcoat* and John Mortimer's *The Dock Brief*. "I think he was always attracted to danger," recalled David Kossoff years later.

Already a talented, classically-trained guitar player, Paul drove his father to further dismay when he abandoned his studies of Bach and Mozart for a new-found obsession with the American blues and soul of artists like Ray Charles and Big Bill Broonzy. And the clincher: seeing Eric Clapton tear the joint up in John Mayall's Bluesbreakers in 1965.

Talking his frazzled parents into buying him a Les Paul, Koss hit the thriving London blues circuit, immediately garnering attention as one of the new breed of guitar virtuosos who felt the sting of every single note they played. Kossoff's trick, says Rodgers, was to play through a Leslie amp, which is what gave him that sweeping

R-TRACK
ISLAND STUDIOS
Edited 11/3/70
DOLBY SYSTEM
FREE
MASTER REEL
Island
1 All Right Now (5:30) A 8/3/70
2 Heavy Load (5:15 to end 5:05 to fade) D 3/3/70
3 Remember (4:30) A 12/2/70
4 Oh I Wept (4:25) E 3/2/70
5 Don't Say You Love Me (6:25) E 8/2/70
6 Fire and Water (4:00) B 19/2/70

U.O.S. BLUES SOCIETY
EASTER TERM AT JIMMY'S
22 Jan. Pete Brown & Piblokto!
29 Jan. Keef Hartley Band
5 Feb. Gordon Giltrap, Andy Fernbach & Guests
12 Feb. Junior's Eyes
19 Feb. Champion Jack Dupree
26 Feb. Free
5 Mar. Mississippi Fred McDowell
12 Mar. Mott the Hoople
EVERY THURSDAY 8.00 p.m.
AT
JIMMY'S, STEINE STREET, BRIGHTON

'organ' sound. "He played every note like his life depended on it. He was just way out there."

"I like it when the music is moving in slow waves... rising and falling," said Kossoff in 1973. Away from the band, however, Koss, searched for those waves in other, less salubrious ways: speed, downers, and eventually, most devastatingly of all, heroin.

LOOKING TO put together a band, it wasn't long before the errant guitarist teamed up with another young blade on a mission to prove himself, drummer Simon Kirke.

London-born, but brought up with his two brothers in the Shropshire village of Clun where they lived in a dilapidated house with no running water, no electricity and an outside loo, Kirke's father had been, at different times, a merchant seaman, a salesman and a factory worker. He was horrified when Simon – inspired by watching Jack Parnell and his orchestra on *Sunday Night At The London Palladium*, then Britain's favourite Sunday night TV show – announced that he was going to be a drummer.

"I had one of those light bulb moments where I suddenly knew what I wanted to do." Simon persuaded his hard-up father to buy him a second-hand snare drum and cymbal, and using a couple of strong twigs as substitute drumsticks he began tapping out rhythms wherever he went.

"My father thought it was a phase. But when I told him I was going to London he was not pleased. In the end I did a deal with him. I promised to return if I hadn't become a pop star inside two years."

Simon never came back. When he joined a blues band called Black Cat Bones that featured a brilliant young guitarist named Paul Kossoff, the two became friends and decided they should form a band of their own. They just needed a singer and a bassist.

DESPITE BEING the youngest of the new four-piece, Andy Fraser was the most musically experienced. His father, who was descended from a Scottish plantation owner and a former black servant in Guyana, left the family home in Roehampton, Southwest London when Andy was just six years old. Fraser and his three siblings were then brought up by his white, English mother.

Times were hard and mum held down three jobs. A loner at school – "I was either a n*gger or the 'weird white kid', I couldn't win," Andy told me – his refuge was music, showing great skill at piano and guitar from an early age. He was 13 when he began playing in reggae, soul and calypso groups in smoky London Caribbean clubs.

But Andy's big break came after a college friend, Sappho, introduced him to her dad – Alexis Korner, godfather of the British blues scene, who became "like the father I never had." It was Korner who recommended Fraser to John Mayall's Bluesbreakers and he subsequently played in a line-up that also included 18-year-old future Stones guitarist Mick Taylor.

"I was 15 and we went off on a tour of Europe – cheekily smoking spliffs with Mick Taylor when Mayall wasn't looking."

It was also Korner who introduced Fraser to "a bunch of kids" he knew who were looking for a bass player. "He was a tough little nut," recalls Kirke. "We knew he had a little bit extra going on when he turned up for the audition in a taxi."

Meeting at the Fickle Pickle pub in London's Finsbury Park area, the wannabe group began jamming on blues boneshakers like BB King's 'Three O'Clock Blues' and 'Spoonful' by Howlin' Wolf. "We clicked straight away," recalls Rodgers. "It just came together instantly."

All they needed was a name. Korner came to the rescue again: "I'd had a trio, Free At Last, with drummer Hughie Flint and bassist Binky McKenzie, but we'd only managed one record before the group folded. So when the boys needed a name for their new group I suggested Free."

The name also reflected the indomitable spirit of the new young band. "We weren't afraid to go up against anyone," says Rodgers. "We would later tour with The Who, Small Faces, Family, anybody, and we were still confident in each other."

Photos: Getty Images/Michael Putland; courtesy of the Strange Things Archive

FREE

FIRST, THOUGH, they needed a record deal. Enter the band's knight in double-denim, Chris Blackwell, owner of Island Records. The label was built on the domestic success of the early-'60s Jamaican sound systems – DJs, engineers and MCs playing ska, rocksteady and reggae. When 'My Boy Lollipop' by Blackwell protegée Millie Small became a worldwide hit in 1964, the main man made the decision to "only work on artists with long-term careers." While this would eventually lead to him turning the domestic Jamaican success of Bob Marley into a vast global phenomenon, Blackwell – who was now based in London – was also quick to sign a raft of brilliant up-and-comers in the white, album-oriented market, beginning with the Spencer Davis Group, then quickly expanding to include Fairport Convention, Traffic, Mott The Hoople, King Crimson – and Free.

> "WE WERE CREATING THE DREAM. WE HADN'T LIVED IT YET. BUT 'FIRE AND WATER' WAS WHEN WE MADE THAT QUANTUM LEAP FROM GOING DOWN VERY WELL, TO GOING DOWN *INCREDIBLY*. EVERY GIG WAS SOLD OUT!"
> **SIMON KIRKE**

The label was situated above a shop called Millets in Oxford Street, and Rodgers recalls the band's first meetings with Blackwell and his Island A&R man Muff Winwood – former Spencer Davis Group bassist and older brother of Steve – as fraught affairs: "It was funny. I insisted we bought a couple of big cigars and sat there smoking them – trying to look grown up." When Winwood quipped, "All right, you're pretty guys, but can you play?" Rodgers exploded. "We're the best f*cking band in the world!" he yelled.

The deal Blackwell offered was an all-encompassing label, publishing and management contract with a £10,000 advance – around £150,000 in today's money. Just one other thing: a new name. "From now on you're the Heavy Metal Kids," Blackwell apparently told them. Rodgers stormed out.

Back home that night, however, the band mocked-up two posters of the names and pinned them on a wall; Free on one side, Heavy Metal Kids on the other. Free still looked best.

Fraser phoned Blackwell. "He said, 'Well, if it's not the Heavy Metal Kids, then Island may not be interested.' I slammed down the phone. Five minutes later Chris called back and said, 'You win.' We had a great relationship after that."

Appointing Island executive Johnny Glover as their day-to-day manager, Free now gigged most nights of the week, playing all over the country, then arriving back in London in the early hours, going straight into the studio to lay down a track or two. "We made all the big decisions," says Rodgers, "Johnny handled the details." This was how their first two albums were made. And despite neither selling enough to get in the charts, the band still built up a devoted following.

According to music newspaper *Disc*, "Free is the group to replace the Stones," while *Melody Maker* noted that Rodgers "with his silver flared pants and tight red sweater is just the part to set the girls screaming."

THE ONLY thing Free lacked was the pivot of a hit song. There were some cornerstone moments, like the Rodgers/Fraser groove-athon, 'I'm A Mover', from the first album 'Tons Of Sobs', or the same songwriting team's slinky 'I'll Be Creepin'' from the follow-up disc 'Free'. But in the main their recorded repertoire relied on reinventing the blues for a psychedelic rock audience, pile-driving through Albert King's strutting 'The Hunter' or turning Howlin' Wolf's 1961 barrelhouse blues 'Goin' Down Slow' into an eight-minute cathedral of fire-and-brimstone sorcery.

After that, said Fraser, "We gradually started bringing our own stuff into the set. I never saw us as just blues rock. Every time someone we considered important released a new album – whether it was the Stones or The Beatles or The Who – we would sit and listen. We'd be like, 'Wow! We can do that!'"

Onstage, says Rodgers, "It was like we had a fifth member. We could read each other, to the extent that Koss and I would know where the other was going to come in. We really *breathed* the music together."

Concert-goers often found it hard to believe the band

members were so young. Rodgers recalls the time they did a session for the BBC's Radio One, and John Peel made a joke about it. "When we'd finished he said something like, 'The average age of this band is only 17. Imagine how they're gonna sound when they're old men – like when they're 20'." And so things might have continued had it not been for Free's next single, 'All Right Now'.

ACCORDING TO Rodgers, the number's genesis came from "the need to find a song that would be as big with our audience as 'The Hunter'. We couldn't play anywhere in the Northeast without doing that one or they'd have lynched us. And I thought we really needed to write one like that. So I wrote the first verse up to the chorus, then Andy went away and came back with the riff. I finished the lyrics while waiting in the street one day for the band to pick me up in the van, and I think we played the song for the first time that night."

According to Fraser, however, inspiration for the song came from a disastrous gig in Hull "playing on a rainy Tuesday to about 20 people whacked out of their heads on Mandrax. Afterwards in the dressing room there was a horrible silence." To cheer everyone up Fraser just started singing "'*It's all right now...*' It was Simon's phrase, but I just started doing it and everyone started joining in..."

Kirke, however, remembers it differently still. "We were playing at the university in Durham and it had been a terrible gig. All our songs then were sort of mid-tempo or 12-bar blues, and the gig had been a bit plodding. Also, we were tired and had probably smoked one joint too many. Afterwards Andy said, 'We need an up-tempo number.' I think he and Rodgers had something cooking, because he turned to him and said, 'How about that one that goes...' and started singing the words '*all right now*' and bopping around and clapping his hands."

Wherever it came from, the song is now recognised as one of the most famous rock numbers of all time, a staple of every pub band's set from Land's End to Los Angeles. Indeed, last year 'All Right Now' received a BMI award for being played on American radio more than six million times since it was first released almost half a century ago.

Island boss Chris Blackwell spotted the song's potential immediately. Originally a lengthy 5.32 album track, he insisted 'All Right Now' be edited down to a four-minute single, losing the third verse and cutting down the guitar solo. Sacrilege in the eyes of the still idealistic young band.

"You can still hear the place where he cut it," says Kirke. "But in the end we had to admit it worked, in terms of turning it into something the radio would play."

BECOMING A hit in more than 20 countries, 'All Right Now' turned the band members' lives upside down, says Kirke. "What's that old Chinese saying: be careful what you wish for? Suddenly instead of playing a different town every night we were playing a different *country*."

Tours of America, Japan, Australia, and the landmark Isle of Wight festival appearance all followed. Meanwhile, the pressure was on to come up with a follow up, "and we just couldn't," sighs Rodgers.

The fact that the album 'All Right Now' came from – the astounding 'Fire And Water' – was also a landmark release only added to the weight of expectation.

Rodgers and Fraser had composed five of the album's seven tracks, including 'All Right Now', and the stupendous title track. The remaining two songs, meanwhile, were among the best things the band would ever record – the Rodgers and Kossoff diamond in the dust, 'Oh I Wept', and the mean, permanent-midnight swagger of 'Mr Big', a rare band composition.

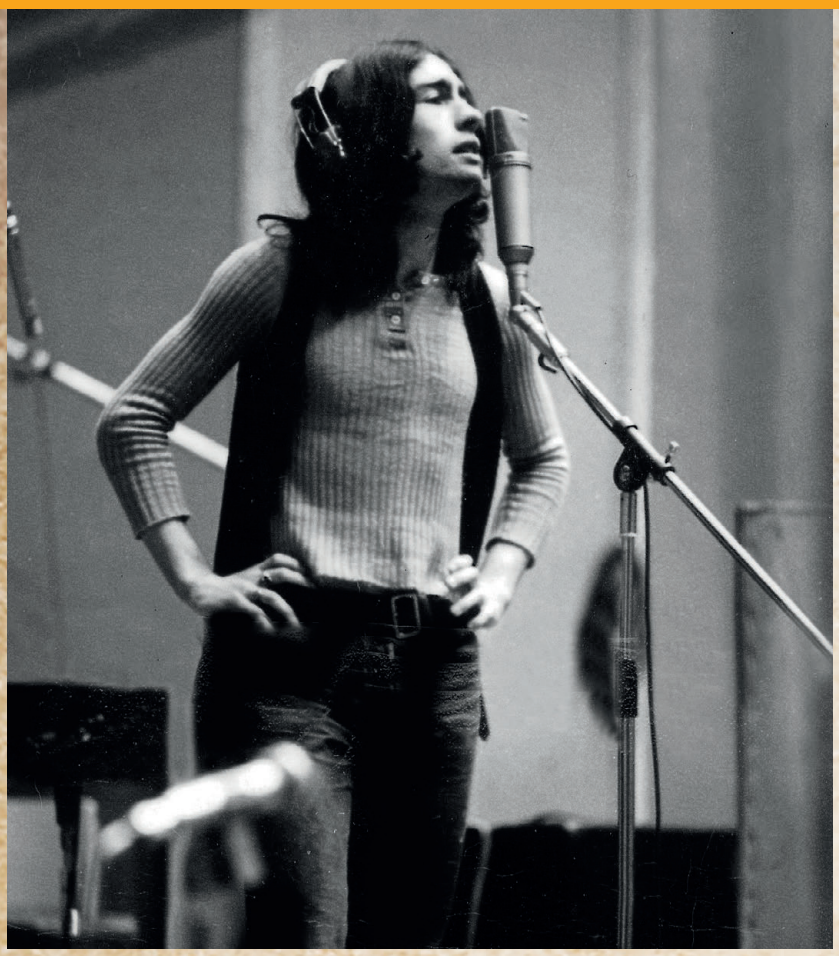
Until now Free had been seen as proud but poor relations to Zeppelin and Cream. Now, after 'Fire And Water', they were recognised for what they really were: a much looser and more abstract band than any of their perceived rivals, a group that understood time and space like no other. Their music couldn't be broken down into fast or slow songs. It was only about tumult and emotion, deep feelings that grew to be as complicated as Fraser's gnawing, elbowing bass, Kossoff's raging waterfall solos, Kirke's tribal, elemental embrace, and Rodgers' softly caressing growl, his thunderous wounded-lion roar.

"We were creating the dream," says Kirke. "We hadn't lived it yet. But 'Fire And Water' was when we made that quantum leap from going down very well, to

Photos: Getty Images/Rolls Press Popperfoto; courtesy of the Strange Things Archive

FREE

going down *incredibly*. Every gig was sold out! We used to drive to some gig, see the lines of people queuing up to get in, and we'd tell our driver, Graham, to go back round the block so we could have another look." But then the dream turned into a nightmare.



"I STILL blame the cover," says Rodgers only half-jokingly of the relative failure of the band's next album, 1970's 'Highway', recorded while 'Fire And Water' was still riding high in the charts. "I remember going to the local record shop when it was released and looking for it in the window and I couldn't see it! It was there – I found it eventually – but it had such a sort of nothing cover it didn't stand out at all. I'm sure a lot of people went to buy it, but couldn't find it and just bought something else instead."

While there may be some truth in this, the fact is that 'Highway' – and its attendant non-hit single, 'The Stealer' – was precisely the kind of Free album that Island had been praying they wouldn't come up with. And yet, conversely, it was also the kind of album only Free could have come up with. Deep, and not making any compromises in terms of trying to be a sequel to 'Fire And Water', 'Highway' was a spellbinding if less immediate musical edifice, operating entirely in a world of its own. The fact that 'Highway' only reached number 41 in the British charts was an unexpected blow. It also failed to build on the US success of 'Fire And Water', which had reached number 17 in the *Billboard* charts. 'Highway' barely crept into the Top 200.

"We'd been listening to 'Music From Big Pink' by The Band and that really influenced us a lot on 'Highway'," Rodgers recalls. "I'd really fallen in love with that more country-ish, folksy music The Band was doing and the new songs reflected that. Maybe a little too much, I don't know. But I was and still am very proud of 'Highway'."

Kirke has a more prosaic view of that time. "'The Stealer' died a death and 'Highway' suffered in the charts because of it, and we were really down about that. That's when Andy and Paul thought, well, we've reached the end of our musical journey together, let's split up."

> "FREE IS LIKE YOUR FIRST LOVE. THEY WILL ALWAYS HOLD THAT MOST SPECIAL PLACE IN MY HEART. THE STORY OF FREE WASN'T ALWAYS A HAPPY ONE, IT HAS TO BE SAID. BUT THE MUSIC WE MADE, WELL, THAT WILL LIVE ON FOREVER."
>
> **PAUL RODGERS**

ACCORDING TO Kirke, Rodgers and Fraser only broke the news to the other two band members on a plane ride to Japan, where they had another tour booked. Even manager Johnny Glover had been kept in the dark.

"The thing is, me and Andy weren't really writing together any more," Rodgers explains. "We'd got to the point where we didn't need the other one to help finish a song any more. And I think we both wanted to explore our own music more, and in our own ways."

Everyone else, though, felt like they'd been left in the lurch. "I'll never forget Koss's reaction," says Kirke. "He slumped like he'd been hit in the stomach." In fact, Koss was in a slump in more ways than one.

"I was living in the same house as him in those days," recalls Kirke, "and I watched as he just sort of... disappeared in front of me."

As Fraser later put it, "Drugs were everywhere in those days. They were seen as 'creative'. But the stuff Koss was on – downers like Mandrax, then smack – there was nothing creative about that. It just wiped him out. And the people giving it to him – all these terrible hangers-on – they were everywhere, loads of them. He never stood a chance, really."

"These days you'd have put him into rehab," says Rodgers. "But no one had heard of rehab back then. There was some electronic contraption that Eric Clapton had used to help him get off drugs [the 'little black box' neuro-electric therapy pioneered by Dr Margaret Patterson] and I believe Koss did give that a go at a later stage, but it just didn't work."

In the meantime, the 21-year-old singer and 18-year-old bassist had zero experience to draw on. "All we knew really was that we wanted to get on and make music."

IN THE midst of this chaos Free – contrary to the last – recorded an unofficial farewell single called 'My Brother Jake' – and watched in astonishment as it rose up the British charts, reaching number four. A sweet rolling shuffle conceived by Fraser, who also contributed its tinkling keyboard part, it was finished off in the studio by

Free photographed backstage together in 1972

Photo: Courtesy of the Strange Things Archive; Getty Images/Michael Putland

Rodgers and really should have been the start of a comeback. But by then it was too late.

Ironically, for both Rodgers and Fraser the demise of Free in spring 1971 meant forming groups that were, essentially, lesser versions of the original band. In Rodgers' case a three-piece called Peace – with him singing and handling guitar – that also included drummer Mick Underwood, who would later find success with Gillan. In Fraser's case, a three-piece called Toby with him singing and Adrian Fisher (later of Sparks) on guitar. Both outfits toured Britain in 1971. Peace opened for Mott The Hoople, where Rodgers became firm friends with guitarist Mick Ralphs, but neither group released any material.

Similarly, Kirke and Kossoff had formed their own Free-lite outfit, with Japanese bassist Tetsu Yamauchi (later of The Faces) and American keyboardist John 'Rabbit' Bundrick (later of The Who). They did release an album – 1972's cumbersomely named 'Kossoff, Kirke, Tetsu and Rabbit' – but it sounded exactly like what it was, a version of Free without Rodgers to front it.

BY THE start of 1972 – and with Kirke pleading for Rodgers and Fraser to come back and reform Free in an effort, as he puts it now, "to try to save Koss from seriously going under" – both men agreed to suspend their solo ambitions and resurrect Free for at least one more album and tour. It didn't hurt that Island were happy to bankroll the project.

The result, released in summer 1972, was 'Free At Last', a cruelly underrated album that remains one of the band's most enjoyable all-round collections, from the muscular good-time groove of 'Catch A Train' to soulful stream-of-consciousness musical meanderings like 'Sail On'. The album also included one of Fraser's Toby originals, 'Travellin'' Man' and another chart single in the gorgeously bouncy 'Little Bit Of Love'.

Critical reaction was mixed, but 'Free At Last' returned the band to the UK Top 10 and they set out on what should have been a glorious return to the road. Instead, it proved a complete disaster, with Koss so out of it that, according to Rodgers, "You could see people in the audience crying watching him struggle."

Kirke recalls playing the Royal Albert Hall in London and "five minutes before we got the call to go onstage, being on my knees showing Koss the chords to 'All Right Now'. That's how bad it was."

Fraser finally quit for good in June 1972 just before a Japanese tour. It wasn't just Kossoff's drug problems, he told me, "We were no longer a tight-knit bunch of commandos watching each other's backs. We were a shadow of our former selves, and for me there were still other worlds to conquer."

FREE FOR ALL

Derek Oliver reappraises each of the band's seven albums that were released between '69 and '73

'Tons Of Sobs' (1969)
By the late '60s Island label boss Chris Blackwell was on a roll. He'd set up the label as a Jamaican ska and bluebeat outlet, but times were a-changing. Progressive rock was making profound moves and Blackwell responded by signing Traffic, Cat Stevens, Jethro Tull... and Free, a now-classic British blues boom outfit featuring two of the greatest musicians of all time in guitarist Paul Kossoff and singer Paul Rodgers. Paired with eccentric producer Guy Stevens, Free sketched out a roadmap to greatness, employing all the late '60s heavy blues tools of the trade. This, their debut, shows Kossoff's style already in place, and Rodgers moaning and groaning like a man possessed. This is nowhere better displayed than on 'I'm A Mover', 'The Hunter' and 'Walk In My Shadow'. Strange album art added to the appeal.

'Free' (1969)
Already hailed as the brightest diamond in Island's roster, Free's eponymous second album rammed the message home in no uncertain terms. Rodgers' voice is just stunning here, while Kossoff's vibrato places him on a pedestal right up there with Hendrix, Clapton and Green. 'Free' also showcased the emerging brilliance of bassist Andy Fraser, his masterful style light years ahead of the competition. Written by Rodgers and Fraser, opening track 'I'll Be Creepin'' shows just how good Free had become. But it's the rolling 'Woman' and 'Songs Of Yesterday' that provide a unique style and date stamp for this album.

'Fire And Water' (1970)
There comes a time in every great group's evolution where they finally crack the code of life. For Free, 'Fire And Water' was that moment. This is as consummate a rock album as you're ever likely to hear, a band crafting the elusive magic of musical cold fusion and taking it all the way to the bank. There's not a foot out of place here. The title track sets the pace for a shower of perfectly crafted songs showcasing carefully choreographed blues rock that hasn't dated one jot. Rough and tough, even on the less bombastic tracks, the focus is nevertheless on ambience, as if the musos were spreading a plush carpet over a rocky pathway. 'Mr. Big' has never been eclipsed for sheer latent power, and album anthem 'All Right Now' became a rock radio staple, ushering Free into the superstar bracket alongside Zeppelin and the Stones.

FREE

Hurriedly recruiting Tetsu and Rabbit, the band scraped through the Japanese dates with Rodgers on guitar after Kossoff pulled out at the last moment. There was a final UK tour in September, but at the soundcheck before the Newcastle show, Koss suffered a drug-related seizure. Although Koss managed to make the rescheduled show on 20 October it was his last performance in Free.

THERE WAS one last album, even though Rodgers and Kirke were the only fully functioning original members of Free left. Released in January 1973, and all-too-appropriately titled 'Heartbreaker', it turned out to be one of their best efforts.

The songs were a hodgepodge. There were two songs Paul had written for and performed in Peace, the apocalyptic 'Seven Angels' and the thunderous title track, and two written by Rabbit, the rootsy, elegiac 'Muddy Water' and the gospel-tinged 'Common Mortal Man'. There were a handful of cobbled-together-in-the-studio lucky strikes like the irrepressibly catchy 'Travellin' In Style' ("Koss's solo on that is excruciating it's so out of tune," says Kirke) and the haunting Rodgers ballad 'Come Together In The Morning'. Yet all the same the whole was utterly remarkable.

"WE WERE NO LONGER A TIGHT-KNIT BUNCH OF COMMANDOS WATCHING EACH OTHER'S BACKS. WE WERE A SHADOW OF OUR FORMER SELVES, AND FOR ME THERE WERE STILL OTHER WORLDS TO CONQUER."
ANDY FRASER

Tetsu and Rabbit had been drafted in to fill out the line-up. "I loved Rabbit's playing on that album," says Rodgers. "It really brought another dimension to our sound. I remember the first time he played the piano on 'Easy On My Soul', which I'd written on the guitar. It was like – wow! Totally transformed it."

And, of course, there was the lead track and final hit single, 'Wishing Well', a wondrous cacophony of rolling thunder guitars and Rodgers' impassioned, despairing vocal.

Finally, Free had their follow-up to 'All Right Now'. Only this time the lyrics – with their incantations about "*a good friend of mine*" who has "*always got something to hide*" and who's only ever satisfied "*with your feet in the wishing well*" – were about more than merely trying to score with some chick. "I don't want to say they were precisely about Koss, but he's definitely one of the people that I was thinking of when I wrote that song," says Rodgers tactfully.

IRONICALLY, KOSSOFF was so strung out during the recording he barely played on the album. Although the sleeve still carried his pic, it tellingly failed to list him as a band member. "I played most of the guitar on that album," Rodgers admits. "It was me and Snuffy Walden." Walden, a cheerful Texan who'd just come out of a band called Stray Dog, played on three tracks on 'Heartbreaker' and would have remained in the band if he hadn't had plans of his own. These days he's best known as the composer of the theme music to American political drama TV series *The West Wing*.

"Paul worked so hard to make that album happen," says Kirke. "He even gave us an equal songwriting credit on 'Wishing Well', which he didn't have to do, but did it anyway to show his gratitude to the band. I still get royalty cheques to this day for 'Wishing Well'."

There was one final stab at touring America, with Osibisa guitarist Wendell Richardson taking Kossoff's spot. "We knew Wendell because Osibisa were on Island in the US," Rodgers explains. "But it was a last minute thing and it wasn't really right for either of us."

Free's last show was at the Hollywood Sportatorium, Florida, on 17 February 1973.

FOR RODGERS and Kirke, the end of Free was also the beginning of Bad Company, built around the friendship Rodgers had made with former Mott The Hoople guitarist Mick Ralphs, whose riff to Mott track 'One Of The Boys' Rodgers would transform into the much raunchier rocker 'Can't Get Enough'. Guided by Zeppelin manager Peter Grant, and with Kirke ensconced on drums, Bad Co. became one of the biggest bands in America.

For the others the story didn't end so happily. Fraser formed Sharks, then left after one album. He recorded a couple of so-so albums as the Andy Fraser Band, then slipped into obscurity for the next two decades, working only occasionally as a behind-the-scenes songsmith for the likes of Robert Palmer, Joe Cocker, Chaka Khan, Joan Jett and Paul Young.

And Koss... well, we all know what happened to Paul Kossoff. After falling out of Free he tumbled even further into heroin addiction. There were attempts to revive his career with a solo album, 1973's 'Back Street Crawler', then with a band of the same name fronted by former Beckett vocalist Terry Slesser, and an album, 'The Band Plays On' in 1975.

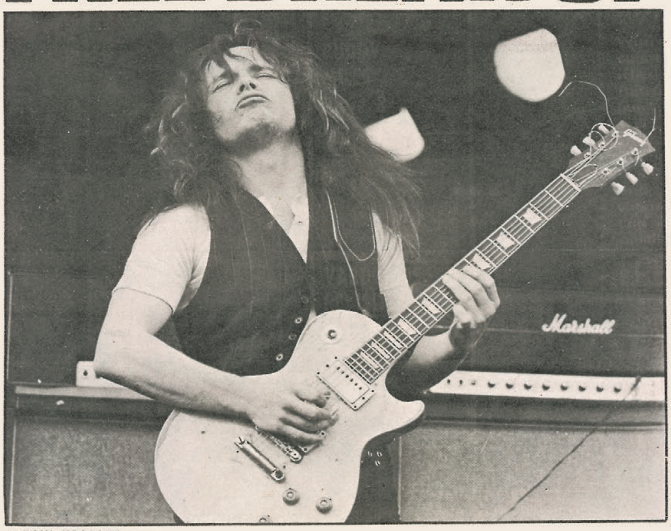
A second Back Street Crawler album, '2nd Street', was recorded in early '76, but another tour had to be curtailed

MUSIC IS THE MESSAGE

sounds

May 22, 1971

FREE BREAK UP



● PAUL KOSSOFF

KOSSOFF AND KIRKE TO FORM NEW BAND

FREE HAVE split up mid-way through their current tour of Australia following a highly successful visit to Japan.

The news came from Island Records' David Sandison last week: "The four members of Free, Paul Rodgers, Simon Kirke, Paul Kossoff and Andy Fraser, this week decided to disband to pursue solo careers. They felt they had achieved as much as they could within the present group and they will not now be playing their scheduled American dates.

EXPECTED

"It is anticipated that guitarist Paul Kossoff and drummer Simon Kirke will stay together to form a new group while bassist Andy Fraser and singer Paul Rodgers will form separate groups. It is expected that three new groups will emerge from the old Free and none of them will be called Free."

The split comes at a time when Free's latest single "My Brother Jake" is high in both the British and Continental charts. The song is number 20 in SOUNDS charts this week.

The group was formed three years ago by Kossoff and Rodgers and were aided a great deal in their early days by bluesman Alexis Korner. During their first two years Free built up a faithful hard chore of fans up and down the country and in that time released two albums on Island — "Tons Of Sobs" and "Free" — both of which sold moderately well but it was not until the early summer of last year that they caused world-wide interest through their hit single "All Right Now" and the subsequent million selling album "Fire And Water". "Highway", their current, album released towards the end of last year is still selling well. There is a further album release due on June 4 on Island, with live material taken from two recent dates at Sunderland and Fairfield Hall, Croydon.

IMPORTANT

Asked in a SOUNDS interview in December of last year about the future of Free, Paul Rodgers said: "We're still very young which is good and what's more important we're still writing. We're getting more into writing and playing together and as long as we continue it will be worthwhile."

have a recording of a track that we did together toward the end, but it's not the greatest. I had to move on, you know?" And so Rodgers formed Bad Company, and wrote another song for Koss called 'Shooting Star'.

"We were doing a gig in New Orleans when we got the news," Kirke recalls. "Peter Grant came to my room and told me before the show. I kind of fell apart in a rage, but Peter made me promise not to tell Paul until after the show. But when he sang 'Shooting Star' that night I nearly lost it again. Afterwards when we told Paul he went mad. Couldn't believe we hadn't told him earlier. It was pretty bad."

because of Kossoff's problems.

Paul performed one last time with his old Free pals, in March 1976 at LA's Starwood club. Back Street Crawler were playing the club, but Bad Company were in town too, and Rodgers and Kirke joined Kossoff onstage.

"It was awful actually," says Kirke now. "We were doing a couple of nights at the LA Forum and he was doing this sh*tty club. He was pretty bitter and in a state. It was terribly sad."

On March 19, on a flight from LA to New York, Paul Kossoff's body was discovered in the plane toilet. David Kossoff and his wife Jenny placed a marble headstone in a corner of their back garden at home in Hertfordshire. The inscription read simply: 'Paul 1950-1976 – All Right Now'.

"When Koss died I was really broken up," says Rodgers. "But I tried, I really did. I actually

FANS OF Free will always feel like the group left unfinished business. Happily, though, in the past few years the band's legacy has been rekindled with a series of box sets, DVDs and, most significantly, the fact that Paul Rodgers has been featuring their best-known songs in his solo sets again.

"For me, Free is like your first love," says Rodgers. "They will always hold that most special place in my heart. The story of Free wasn't always a happy one, it has to be said. But the music we made, well, that will live on forever."

'Highway' (1970)
Having achieved fame and fortune with their previous album, 'Highway' showcases Free in far more relaxed form, like they're enjoying the calm after a storm. Sadly, it was also the final album to frame the band's fellowship, with tension bubbling between Fraser and Rodgers, and Paul Kossoff drifting off into a drug-fuelled malaise. The material is lighter and less intense, poppier even, but there's still room for Free to flex their blues rock power with brooding ease. For some, however, it was the lighter fare that saved the day, as 'On My Way' and 'Bodie' ably demonstrate. But if it's crunch you desire, look no further than 'The Stealer' and 'Ride On A Pony', which featured arguably Rodgers' greatest vocal.

'Free Live!' (1971)
Enough was enough and Free split in early 1971, with Andy Fraser opting to leave first, while Paul Kossoff was virtually unable to carry on a normal existence. Fortunately Island had recorded two great gigs from which this live album was compiled. It shows the band in raw muscular mood with no overdubs, so what you hear is what you get. As a vehicle for Paul Rodgers' vocal prowess it's near perfect and Kossoff's blinding vibrato is utterly spellbinding, especially on 'I'm A Mover' and 'Fire And Water'. Look out for the addition of a studio track, 'Get Where I Belong', while the US version also added the hit single 'My Brother Jake', released just as the band split up.

'Free At Last' (1972)
Paul Kossoff relapsed to such an extent following the split that Rodgers, Fraser and Kirke made the decision to reform the band in a concerted effort to rescue him from drug-induced oblivion. The idea was to provide a support network that would hopefully get Koss back on the straight and narrow. Sadly the move failed, although the album was completed to everyone's satisfaction. The material was, in comparison to previous recordings, relatively subdued, giving off the vibe that this was a band that had already reached its sell-by date and was heading to pastures new. Having said that, both 'Catch A Train' and 'Little Bit Of Love' showcased Free perfectly, with Kossoff wailing profusely like nothing at all was amiss.

'Heartbreaker' (1973)
The band's final album was recorded and released under the most strained of conditions. Paul Kossoff was in such a state due to his ongoing drug use that it's no surprise to find out that he didn't play on all these album tracks. Paul Rodgers and former Stray Dog man Snuffy Walden stepped up to save the record. At this point Kossoff wasn't even listed as a band member on the album sleeve. And yet despite this deepening tragedy, the album showcases some of Free's greatest songs, including the ripping title track, the strutting 'Wishing Well', 'Travellin' In Style' and the deeply soulful 'Come Together In The Morning'. It was all change in other areas too, with Andy Fraser replaced by Japanese bassist Tetsu Yamauchi and John 'Rabbit' Bundrick added on keyboards. It was to be the last Free album, but at least they bowed out on a high.

Photos: Getty Images/Michael Putland; courtesy of the Strange Things Archive

HELLO CLE

Steve Popovich (second right) together with (from left) comedian John Belushi, Meat Loaf, and Loaf's live singer Karla DeVito

Ian Hunter onstage with Meat Loaf

Ellen Foley and Mick Jones

Ronnie Spector with the E Street Band and Bruce Springsteen (seated)

It's highly unlikely that the incredible worldwide success of **Meat Loaf's 'Bat Out Of Hell'** would ever have happened without music industry man **Steve Popovich** and his amazing label, **Cleveland International Records**. *Howard Johnson* uncovers an astonishing tale of an unsung hero who really *was* in it for the music…

VELAND

"All this energy callin' me/Back where it comes from/ It's such a crude attitude/It's back where it belongs/ All the little kids growin' up on the skids are goin'/ Cleveland Rocks, Cleveland Rocks"
Ian Hunter – 'Cleveland Rocks'

IT'S NO COINCIDENCE THAT the writers of genius rock'n'roll mockumentary *This Is Spinal Tap* chose Cleveland as the setting for the infamous scene where the band get lost in a backstage labyrinth and can't find their way to the stage. "Hello Cleveland!" shouts hapless bassist Derek Smalls, trying to keep the vibe alive as the band consistently fail to find the right door. "HELLO CLEVELAND!"

Cleveland may only be the 52nd largest city in the United States, but it's always punched above its weight in the world of rock. America's first shock jock Alan Freed – the man widely credited with popularising the phrase "rock'n'roll" on 1950s US radio – found fame broadcasting out of Cleveland on the WJW station. And as the '60s and '70s saw rock music growing in cultural importance, Cleveland became recognised as a key breakout market for up and coming acts.

Between 1974 and 1980 Cleveland hosted what would become the legendary World Series Of Rock, a multi-act series of summer rock gigs held at the Cleveland Stadium. The list of performers during that halcyon seven-year period reads like a who's who of all-time rock greats. Lynyrd Skynyrd, REO Speedwagon, Rolling Stones, Yes, Aerosmith, Blue Öyster Cult, Ted Nugent, Peter Frampton, Kansas, Foreigner, Journey, Thin Lizzy, AC/DC, Scorpions. Each and every one of them said "Hello Cleveland!"

Yet while Cleveland had a mighty reputation for loving its rock music, the American rock industry had absolutely no intention of setting up a base camp in that particular industrial city. The music moguls loved having Cleveland radio stations like WMMS break their acts, of course, but would no sooner contemplate leaving their traditional artistic, swanky hubs of New York and Los Angeles for Cleveland than fly. Well not until a certain Steve Popovich came along, that is. And just for a short time it looked like Popovich might make Cleveland the centre of the rock'n'roll universe...

> "STEVE WAS A FORCE OF NATURE. HE TRULY BELIEVED IN MUSIC, ALL KINDS OF MUSIC. AS LONG AS IT WAS HEARTFELT AND HONEST, HE COULD GET BEHIND IT."
> **SOUTHSIDE JOHNNY**

STEVE POPOVICH was born on 6 July 1942 and grew up in southwestern Pennsylvania, in coal field territory some 60 miles south of Pittsburgh. Music was very important to the Serbian miners with whom Popovich had shared heritage. His dad worked in the mines himself and played Yugoslavian folk music, while a local priest taught the young Steve to sing in Serbo-Croat from the age of five. When he was in high school he played in a traditional polka band – a style of music that originated in the Czech republic in the early 19th century. Steve never lost his love for the genre.

When Steve's dad died at the age of just 44, the family moved 190 miles to Cleveland, primarily because other family members were already there. Popovich joined a popular local rock band, The Twilighters, as a bassist and was soon earning a healthy $200 a week, which was great money for a 17 or 18-year-old. Aware, however, of how precarious a musician's life can be, when Popovich heard that Columbia Records were opening a warehouse in Cleveland in 1962, he managed to talk his way into a job there. To his own great surprise he found that he enjoyed the *business* of music even more than he enjoyed the act of making music himself. He married, had a daughter, and worked his way up the food chain from warehouse to inventory control and eventually on to the Columbia sales desk, primarily working in local radio promotion. After coming to the attention of Columbia's head of promotion Ron Alexenburg, Popovich moved to New York in 1969.

"I was in my mid-20s and spent the next four years working with Ron and [music industry legend] Clive Davis," said Popovich in a 2006 interview. "That was when I earned my Master's in the music business." Popovich travelled all over the States promoting the likes of Blood, Sweat And Tears, Boz Scaggs and Janis Joplin, and in 1972 at the age of just 30 he became the first vice president of promotions at Columbia and the company's youngest ever vice president. Steve's enthusiasm for music and his passion for the artists who made the sounds soon saw him switch to vice president of A&R, and between 1974 and 1976, with his friend Ron Alexenburg now president of CBS subsidiary Epic Records, Popovich was instrumental in developing the careers of rising rock stars including Boston and ►

Photos: Courtesy of Steve Popovich Jr; Getty Images/Ebet Roberts/Redferns; Getty Images/Michael Putland

INSIDE STORY

Meat meets The Nuge. The two collaborated on Ted Nugent's 1976 album 'Free-For-All'

Cheap Trick. Popovich's good instincts "exploded the label" and sent turnover skyrocketing from $35million in 1974 to $150million just two years later.

"I never questioned any artists that Steve Popovich wanted to add to the Epic label," said Alexenburg. "All I would say to him was 'Do you love it? Do you want it?' And off we went."

POPOVICH WAS clearly set for a stellar career in New York, but in 1977 he made a decision that would not only affect his life, but would also create one of the music industry's greatest successes.

"I was in my mid-30s and had already accomplished a lot of what I wanted to do," Popovich would recount many years later. "Corporate life no longer held any appeal, so I decided to quit CBS, to be creative and do what I really wanted to do. I always felt that I got on better with the creative community than I did with the business community, because I tried not to be a typical business person."

Popovich had noticed that Cleveland had become "a hotbed of rock, but there was no major record label in Cleveland." This was his chance to use all of the vast experience he'd gained to do something he was truly passionate about – in a place he called home. In 1977 Steve Popovich moved back to Cleveland and Cleveland International Records was born.

"Dad never forgot his Cleveland roots," says his son Steve Popovich Jr. "He was never into the glamorous lifestyle. He was just very passionate about music and working with artists he believed in. There was always music in the house and the car, 24/7, 365 days a year. He loved great music of all kinds, from rock to country to polka. He really was the ultimate music guy. Dad left New York to go back to Cleveland partly because he got tired of commuting between New Jersey where he lived and New York. I just don't think that was where he wanted to raise a family. So he had the idea of starting a label in Cleveland, which was unprecedented for that time. My dad had seen how Sam Phillips had put Sun Records together in Memphis back in the '50s and wanted to do the same in the city where he felt most at home.

"Dad knew that there was a vibrant music community in Cleveland that had been pretty influential in breaking a lot of acts. The Belkins, who were one of the biggest independent concert promoters in America, were there. The Agora Ballroom and Leo's Casino were important Cleveland venues. There was rock'n'roll history, you know..."

> "IT WAS ALL ABOUT HARD WORK, PERSISTENCE AND GOING TO WAR FOR WHAT YOU BELIEVED IN. AND EVENTUALLY IT PAID OFF BIG TIME. THE MEAT LOAF ALBUM CHANGED THE FUTURE OF CLEVELAND INTERNATIONAL. THEY REALLY CAUGHT LIGHTNING IN A BOTTLE WITH THAT ONE."
> **STEVE POPOVICH JR**

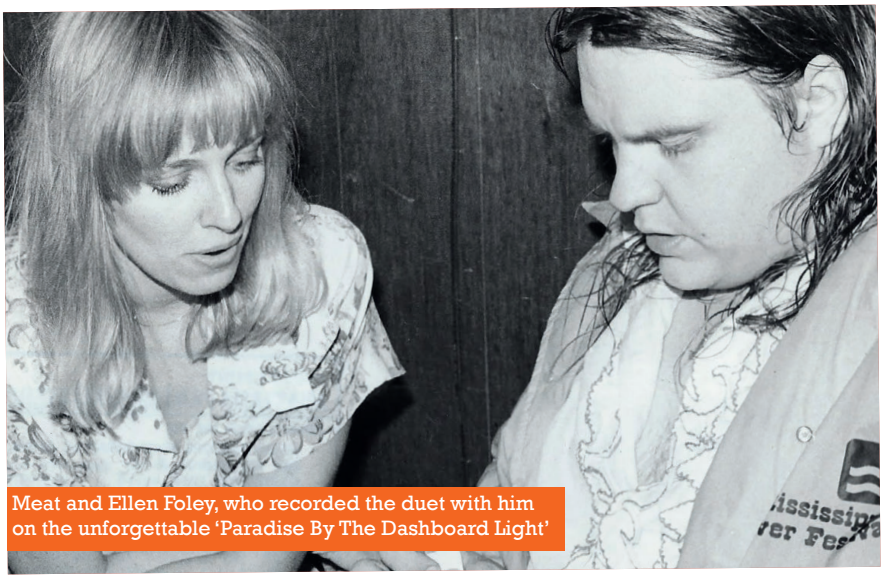
GIVEN THE success he'd delivered to the label during his time in New York, CBS were keen to offer Popovich a distribution deal for his new venture. But they also wanted to fund Cleveland International as a 'partner participant' to the tune of $150,000 a year. This, said Popovich, paid for "salaries, travel, expenses and offices." He decided to offer a 49 per cent stake in the new label to two former CBS employees, one a business and accounting expert, the other a sales guy. They both worked out of New York, while Popovich set up a home office in Willoughby, 20 miles outside of Cleveland. He took three artists from CBS to start the new Cleveland

International label, a country crooner called Eddie Middleton, a Chicago R&B group called Essence, and former Ronettes singer Ronnie Spector. Thanks to the affinity he always said he felt with musicians, Popovich pulled some favours and released a star-studded first single on Cleveland International, 'Say Goodbye To Hollywood', a number written by Billy Joel that had first featured on the singer/songwriter's 1976 album 'Turnstiles'. Joel admitted that he'd originally written the song with Phil and Ronnie Spector in mind. Popovich drafted in The E Street Band to perform the track with Ronnie, while Miami Steve Van Zandt handled production duties.

"It was never really business with Steve," says Van Zandt. "It was always very personal. There was an emotional connection to music that required a full commitment to it."

Southside Johnny, another famous musical son of New Jersey, was also involved in the project.

"Ronnie came with us on the bus for a few months to promote the tune and we had a great time," he recalls. "But she had some of the strangest fans I have ever seen. Drooling fanboys were not what I was used to seeing from the front of the stage."



Meat and Ellen Foley, who recorded the duet with him on the unforgettable 'Paradise By The Dashboard Light'

Meat with Steve Popovich (fourth from left) celebrating the phenomenal success of 'Bat Out Of Hell'

Despite the pedigree of the participants, 'Say Goodbye To Hollywood' wasn't a hit. "We put out some singles, nothing really happened," said Popovich in matter-of-fact manner about those early days. He may well have been worried about Cleveland International's slow start, but salvation was hiding just around the corner in the least likely of places.

"I'D MET Meat Loaf in 1976," Popovich recalled 30 years later when talking to radio presenter Anita Campbell. "Ted Nugent wanted a singer and Tom Werman [who was producing the 'Free-For-All' album for Popovich's Epic label] had found Meat in the Village and put him on some tracks on the record. Well, Meat came to me in 1977 with this record he'd already recorded with a guy called Jim Steinman titled 'Bat Out Of Hell'. The album had already been passed on by at least four record companies that I knew of. People had told Meat he was too fat, that his voice was too operatic and that the songs were too long. But when I got the album I listened, and then I kept listening. It was so far to the left it was crazy. But my feeling had always been that if you do things to the left of what everyone else is doing, then if you get an opportunity you can get great acceptance. And I felt that about Meat Loaf."

"Everyone turned the Meat Loaf album down, from Clive Davis to [another industry giant] Mo Ostin," says Steve Popovich Jr. "But the album really grew on my dad and he believed in it so much. You have to remember that in 1977 it was all about good-looking skinny kids like Peter Frampton, not 350lb guys like Meat Loaf singing seven-minute operatic songs. But dad always had an eye for things coming out of left field. He was never a traditionalist. He thrived on a challenge, and he thrived on proving people wrong"

"He was one of the true believers," Meat Loaf collaborator Jim Steinman later said of Popovich in an interview posted on his website. "He heard the record and didn't need to know anything else."

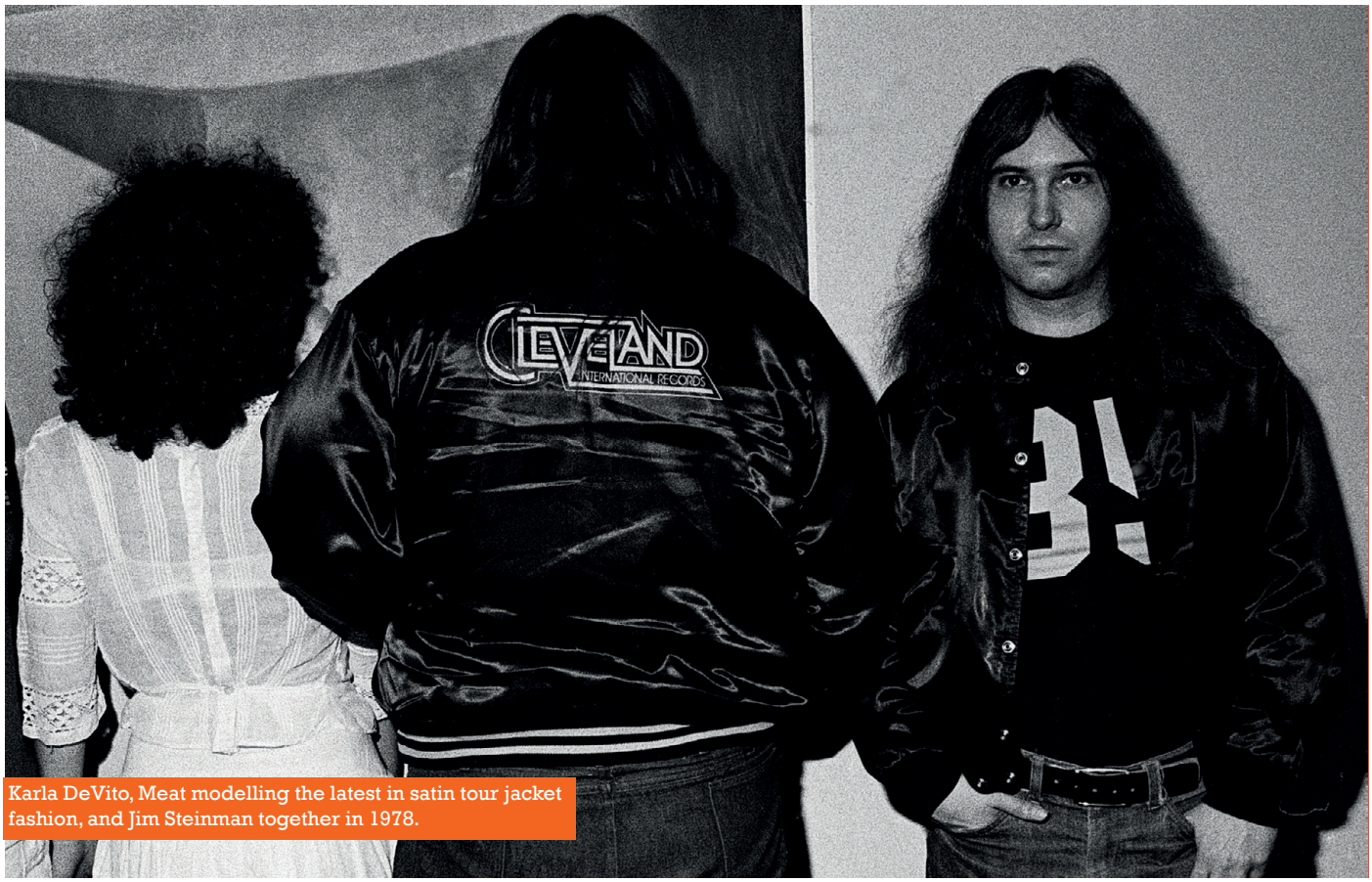
'Bat Out Of Hell' was the first album to be released on Cleveland International in September of 1977, with distribution through CBS. But it certainly didn't catch fire overnight.

"Steve wasn't getting arrested with Meat at first," says Judd Lander, a friend of Popovich's who was working in the promotions department at CBS in London in 1977. "He sent me a video of the track 'Bat Out Of Hell' and said 'We've spent sh*tloads of money on this. Please check it out.' The problem was, it was something like nine minutes long and I wasn't really sure I'd be able to get it played anywhere. In the end I managed to convince the people at *The Old Grey Whistle Test* [a hugely influential UK TV show for album-oriented artists] to take a punt and they played the whole thing! That's what really set Meat Loaf on his way in the UK."

"It took a while for the album to fully break," agrees Steve Popovich Jr. "They had a little bit of interest from the UK, Australia and Canada, but it was slow in

Photos: Getty Images/Michael Putland; courtesy of Steve Popovich Jr

the States. It was only New York, Omaha and, of course, Cleveland that picked 'Bat Out Of Hell' up at first. And CBS wanted dad to get a second album ready. But he was convinced there was much more to do on that first record so he said, 'No way! We've only just scratched the surface.' It was all about hard work, persistence and going to war for what you believed in. And eventually it paid off big time. The Meat Loaf album changed the future of Cleveland International. They really caught lightning in a bottle with that one."



Karla DeVito, Meat modelling the latest in satin tour jacket fashion, and Jim Steinman together in 1978.

> "STEVE POPOVICH WAS ONE OF THE TRUE BELIEVERS. HE HEARD THE RECORD AND DIDN'T NEED TO KNOW ANYTHING ELSE."
> **JIM STEINMAN**

BUT WHILE Meat Loaf was by a country mile the most commercially successful artist signed to Cleveland International, Popovich's enthusiasm for music meant that there were a number of other acts he was also trying to break.

"He was totally involved in the A&R side of things at Cleveland," says Steve Popovich Jr. "Together with Cleveland Records promotions man Marty Mooney, Dad produced the first two albums by a Pittsburgh band called Iron City Houserockers under the moniker of The Slimmer Twins [a nod to the Jagger/Richards pseudonym, the Glimmer Twins, and a self-deprecating joke about the fact that Popovich and Mooney were much fatter]."

Cleveland International was a place where artists could find a spiritual home and a sense of community. This led to lots of collaborations between a tight group of musicians. Ellen Foley – who sang the duet with Meat Loaf on 'Paradise By The Dashboard Light' from 'Bat Out Of Hell' – made a debut album for Cleveland, 1979's 'Night Out', that was produced by Ian Hunter and Mick Ronson. The English pair also worked with The Slimmer Twins and Steve Van Zandt from The E Street Band on the second album by Iron City Houserockers, 1980's 'Have A Good Time But Get Out Alive'. Meanwhile, members of The Clash collaborated with Ellen Foley on her second album for Cleveland International, 1981's 'Spirit Of St. Louis'. Foley was dating Clash guitarist Mick Jones at the time.

One Cleveland International act that *Rock Candy Mag* readers will find of particular interest is The Boyzz. Hailing from Fox Lake, Illinois, a small town some 45 miles north of Chicago, The Boyzz was the heaviest band Popovich signed to the label. Their 1978 debut, 'Too Wild To Tame', is an undiscovered biker rock classic, with frontman Dirty Dan Buck and his five fellow musical hoodlums cooking up some raunchy and rude, southern-flecked rock'n'roll that had plenty of character and a good number of nifty tunes. But like much of the Cleveland International output, the quality of the music didn't translate into huge sales.

'Bat Out Of Hell' far outstripped everything else on Cleveland from a commercial point of view – and how! By 1982 the album had sold a staggering 10 million copies. Sadly, though, Cleveland International was still

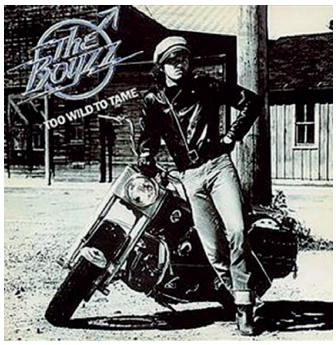
Photo: Getty Images/Rick Diamond

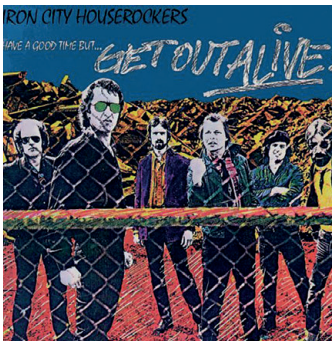
$6million in the hole. How could that be? According to Popovich himself, "CBS had advanced us the dollars to sign and market and promote our acts. But there was this thing called cross-collateralisation." Cross-collateralisation means that any loans made by a record company can be collected against *all* loans made by them. So in effect, 'Bat Out Of Hell' was making money hand over fist, but because the other acts were losing money, CBS were holding back payment until *all* of Cleveland International's debts were paid.

"I was charged every nickel that was advanced," said Popovich. "And so despite the fact that the Jim Steinman album I did [1981's 'Bad For Good'] sold a million and so did Ellen Foley, when I met with my partners in 1982 I said that it wasn't worthwhile continuing, because I couldn't see any progress financially."

"My dad folded the company, because it just didn't make any sense to continue," says Steve Popovich Jr. "And it wasn't until the advent of CDs a while later that Cleveland eventually ended up in the black."

WITH THE label mothballed, Steve Popovich left Cleveland in 1986 and moved to Nashville to run Polygram's country division when his son Steve Jr was just six years old. But by 1994 he was back in Cleveland giving Cleveland International Records another shot, this time with his son at his side.





"I started out at the bottom in the mailroom and learned the trade alongside my dad," says Steve Jr. "I worked my way up to overseeing the catalogue division and really learned about the music business from being alongside him day after day."

Yet the ghost of 'Bat Out Of Hell' was always in the room, especially when Popovich Sr started to become suspicious that Epic had not properly accounted for all the CD sales of the album, which by his reckoning would have repaid all the monies owed and should have at last been delivering a pretty healthy profit to Cleveland International.

"In 1995, my dad sued the parent company Sony, believing he, his partners and Meat Loaf were owed $19-20million in unpaid royalties for 'Bat Out Of Hell'," explains Steve Jr. The case was settled in 1998, and part of the settlement was that all versions of 'Bat Out Of Hell' ongoing would feature the Cleveland International logo. Very quickly Popovich started visiting record stores to check whether the Cleveland logo actually was on the product. It wasn't.

"After numerous letters and phone calls that weren't responded to, my dad was forced to file another lawsuit in 2002 in the federal court in Cleveland," says Steve Jr. "In 2005 he won a jury verdict that Sony then appealed, but in 2008 he finally won and it was over with."

"I gave them ownership of all the master recordings of 'Bat Out Of Hell' in return for a royalty and for my label logo being displayed whenever those masters were used," said Popovich. "It's a very valuable asset and there was very serious money being made. That's why I fought so hard for it. My little company started this thing and without it this project would never have seen the light of day. It's absolutely true that we couldn't have done it on our own. We definitely needed CBS and their distribution network. But we wanted honest accounting."

Steve Popovich won his battle against music industry big business, but there was a heavy price to pay. He died in 2011 at the age of just 68, and his son is convinced that the long court cases took their toll on Popovich's health.

"I honestly believe that the stress of fighting those court cases killed him," says Steve Jr. "It was extremely difficult for me to see someone I loved so much getting totally consumed by the business, when all the time I knew he was a *music* man. But nothing I could do or say could convince him to walk away. He said he was doing it for everyone who'd ever been screwed over by the industry, but it definitely took him away from being a creative force."

NOW, THOUGH, more than 40 years since his dad first started Cleveland International Records, Steve Popovich Jr has revived the label once more, believing that its place in rock'n'roll history and his dad's contribution to the industry hasn't yet been fully recognised.

"It's not about me and it never has been about me," says Steve Jr. "It's about continuing my dad's legacy. We've just reissued a 1995 compilation CD, 'Cleveland Rocks', on vinyl for the first time and the barcode features the numbers 7642, which is my dad's birthday, 6 July 1942. I'd like to think that this latest incarnation of the label encompasses everything that he was about. And while I live in Nashville now, I believe that the spirit of the label will forever be in Cleveland."

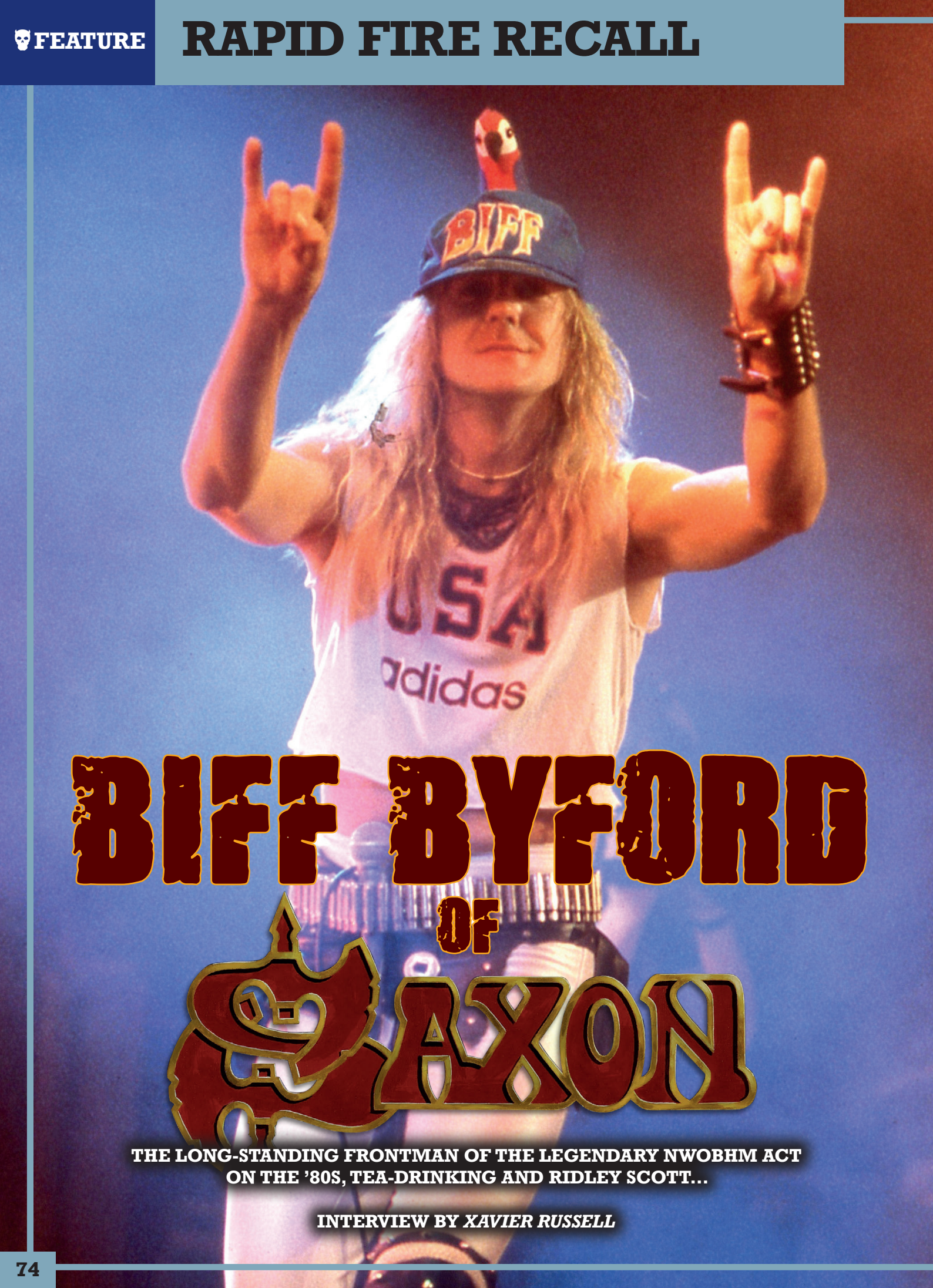
Steve Popovich Jr isn't alone in believing his dad needs to be honoured by the music business.

"Steve was a force of nature," says Southside Johnny. "He truly believed in music; all kinds of music. As long as it was heartfelt and honest, he could get behind it. He and Steve Van Zandt were friends for 40 years. I miss his enthusiasm and integrity and sheer craziness about music. They don't make guys like him anymore."

But let's leave the last word to Ian Hunter, the rocker who immortalised Cleveland in song.

"There should be a statue of him outside the Hall Of Fame," claims the Mott The Hoople singer. "Because Steve Popovich represents rock'n'roll. The real thing, not the corporate bullsh*t."

RAPID FIRE RECALL



BIFF BYFORD OF SAXON

THE LONG-STANDING FRONTMAN OF THE LEGENDARY NWOBHM ACT ON THE '80S, TEA-DRINKING AND RIDLEY SCOTT...

INTERVIEW BY *XAVIER RUSSELL*

SON OF A BITCH

"That was the name of the band before we changed it to Saxon. But that wasn't the first group I was in. Before that [guitarist] Paul Quinn and I were in a band called Coast that used to play all the pubs. [Guitarist] Graham Oliver and [bassist] Steve Dawson were in another local band and then we just sort of crashed together and became Son Of A Bitch. There wasn't really much of a metal scene back then, but I suppose we developed one. There were a lot of cover bands in Yorkshire doing the circuit, but we would try out new songs in the pubs and clubs. People seemed to like our original songs and gradually we built up a loyal following."

THE NICKNAME BIFF

"There's no big explanation. My older brother was called Biff at school and for some reason or other the nickname just got passed down to me. There was no more to it than that."

BEING CALLED 'THE BARNSLEY BIG TEASERS'

"[*Sounds* music paper journalist] Geoff Barton came up with that phrase to describe the band, but the thing is I'm not even from Barnsley! The only band member who's from the town is Paul Quinn. I used to live around the Barnsley area, though, and I liked it. Barnsley, Rotherham, Sheffield and Doncaster are all decent places in Yorkshire."

THE NEW WAVE OF BRITISH HEAVY METAL

"Well that was Geoff Barton again. I think he just wanted to find a way of setting the newer bands apart from the older groups. Maybe a few older acts got carried along with it, because people like Judas Priest and Motörhead were already fairly big when the phrase was first invented. But it did help people understand the difference between, say, Maiden and Saxon on the one hand, and Purple and Sabbath on the other – those acts from a different generation. It never really bothered me to be labelled a NWOBHM act. I wrote a song called 'Heavy Metal Thunder', didn't I, so I was hardly going to be bothered by that name, was I?"

IRON MAIDEN

"We played with Iron Maiden quite a bit in the early days, and we also played with Samson when Bruce Dickinson was their singer. We knew each other and we were sort of friendly rivals, I guess. We used to meet occasionally at service stations on the UK motorways like Watford Gap or Woolley Edge at three o'clock in the morning – those infamous sausage, bacon and egg sandwich places. Back in the day we were always bumping into other bands travelling up and down either the M1 or the A1 after gigs."

CARRERE RECORDS

"It wasn't a label that was traditionally associated with metal, but they offered us money and we took it. We had a lot of success with Carrere in our early days, actually, even though they were really an indie label. The thing is, they were distributed through a major company worldwide, which was Warner Bros. So it worked out well for us."

Biff in full regalia. "I loved the '80s."

"MOST OF THE AMERICAN BANDS THAT CAME OUT IN THE MID-'80S WERE INFLUENCED BY MAIDEN, SAXON AND PRIEST. METALLICA HAVE ALWAYS BEEN MASSIVE SAXON FANS."

THE FIRST MONSTERS OF ROCK

"That was 16 August 1980, and it was the first time a lot of people had ever seen us. The 'Wheels Of Steel' album had done well and the crowd already knew a bit about what we sounded like, so playing to so many rock fans that day was a really magical moment. I suppose we were underdogs, but we were well drilled and could turn in a decent live performance. But even so the reaction we got was a big surprise for us. We were the first band to play the UK Monsters Of Rock Festival twice, actually. We were back there in 1982, though that time we were much higher up the bill, thankfully!"

SUCCESS

"It was great to be riding high in those early days. Personally I think we did too much too soon, but that's just my spin on it. The first four albums did really well, but then we sort of changed when 'Power & The Glory' came out in 1983. It was still a big record for us, but success sort of changed us... sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse."

THE SAXON/RIDLEY SCOTT CONNECTION

"I used to come to London quite a lot with our manager, Nigel Thomas, and Nigel was friends with Ridley. At the time Ridley was about to start production on a film called ***Blade Runner*** and I remember we even talked about doing some music for the film. Sadly it never happened. I think Ridley designed the album cover artwork for the 'Power & The Glory' album as a favour for Nigel. I did go to dinner with Ridley a few times. Nigel had a lot of what I would call 'up there' friends, very inspirational people."

ACTING

"I've done a bit of acting here and there over the years. I think singers often get offered that kind of work, because they're used to performing in front of a live audience or in front of a camera. I quite like acting, actually. It's good fun."

TEA

"To be honest we left the tea thing behind quite a long time ago. Back in the day it was just something the managers used to get us talked about in the press. ►

Photos: IconicPix/Ray Palmer Archive; Getty Images/Paul Natkin

RAPID FIRE RECALL

Saxon photographed backstage at the International Amphitheatre, Chicago, 13 March 1982. L-R: Paul Quinn (guitar), Nigel Glockler (drums), Biff Byford (vocals and Spandex), Graham Oliver (guitar), Steve 'Dobby' Dawson (bass)

They'd try every angle, so they just invented these daft things, like the idea that we were these really big tea drinkers. It was just to be different, really, but I think tags like that stick."

EMI RECORDS

"It's a strange thing that we eventually ended up signed to EMI, because in the early days the guys that ran Carrere Records in London were working for EMI. They got hold of a demo tape we'd sent to EMI, so in effect they stole the band from EMI and took us to Carrere. So when we finally signed to EMI [for the 'Innocence Is No Excuse' album in 1985] we ended up on the label that we should have been on in the first place! The EMI thing was great, but we were actually on Parlophone, which was a little bit more the arty side of the label. I didn't really get into that. Sadly Parlophone were more into the image side of things. So looking back, I think it was the wrong decision to be on Parlophone. I think we should have been with EMI and we should have carried on making our music without too many outside influences."

'RIDE LIKE THE WIND'

"We didn't have enough songs for the [1988] 'Destiny' album, to tell you the truth. I've always loved that tune and always imagine riding a motorbike listening to it, though I'm sure [original writer and performer] Christopher Cross was probably thinking more about sailing yachts! For me, though, the connotation is fast girls and motorcycles. I suggested doing it, then Paul Quinn and I transposed it into more of a rock song, and we all really liked it. It turned out to be the best song on the album, both production-wise and for the amount of airplay it got."

THE 1980S

"I loved the '80s. It was a great decade for us, especially the early '80s. We were quite a big band then and

Photo: Getty Images/Paul Natkin

we inspired a lot of younger musicians to create new music. Most of the American bands that came out in the mid-'80s were influenced by Maiden, Saxon and Priest. Metallica have always been massive Saxon fans. I really enjoyed singing 'Motorcycle Man' with them at their 30th Anniversary show at the Fillmore in San Francisco back in December of 2011."

YOUR AUTOBIOGRAPHY

"I'm generally happy with my autobiography, *Never Surrender (Or Nearly Good Looking)*, which came out in 2007. But the publisher had never pushed it all that much. It's alright, but we should probably do a re-write and update it a bit."

OLIVER/DAWSON SAXON

"I think they're still going under the Oliver/Dawson Saxon banner. It's a long, long time since I worked with those guys. I think they do a few bike festivals now and again, and the odd tribute show here and there. They're alright, and I suppose they're making a bit of money."

'THE EAGLE HAS LANDED 40 (LIVE)'

"This is a triple live album with 40 tracks in various fancy formats, celebrating the 40 years since the debut album came out back in 1979. It's a pretty immense thing really. To support it we'll be doing some big shows in Europe and three UK gigs in October on 'The Castles And Eagles' tour. That's all we're doing this year. People are going to have to travel to see us this year, unfortunately. I know it's a bit of a pain, because we usually go to the people, but this time it's their turn to make the effort, they have to come to us. We're going to be filming two concerts and I think we're filming the production set up as well. I recently found my old motorcycle from the '80s in somebody's garden, so we're getting that restored and hopefully it will ready for October so we can bring it onstage."

UNCOVERED

Photo: Getty Images/Fin Costello

THE HIT MAN!

He may not be a household name, but **Russ Ballard** has written more rock classics than you could possibly imagine. *Jon Hotten* meets the great man at home and discusses everything from success with Argent, to delivering mega-hits for Rainbow and Kiss and on to making tons of cash from an advert featuring the Bayern Munich football team!

RUSS BALLARD HAS ROCK star genes. If you didn't immediately recognise him – and his has been a career conducted mostly out of the spotlight – then you would recognise his type: sunglasses, cheekbones, good hair, skinny jeans. Standing at the door of his handsome farmhouse in Hertfordshire he looks two decades younger than his 73 years. In his hand is a glass filled with some kind of green super nutrient shake, part of his secret, perhaps.

Another might be his quiet passion for what he does, which seems completely undimmed. As we settle into his conservatory, overlooking a paddock that contains several damp horses grazing in the mizzle of a grey June morning, Ballard is rarely still. He fetches an acoustic guitar from the living room and lays it against a nearby sofa, jumping up and down to get it every time he wants to remind me of a tune or a lyric. Not just songs of his either. While he recalls a childhood growing up no more than 10 miles from where we sit, he marks out the time in hits of the era – 'Rubber Ball', 'Just Walking In The Rain' – his fingers seeking out notes and chords in the way others rummage through a box of old photographs.

> "FIRST CHEQUE I GOT, REMEMBER THIS IS 1971, FIRST CHEQUE WAS FOR 10 GRAND. AND I ALSO GOT THE PRS ON TOP OF THAT, ABOUT THE SAME AGAIN. I BOUGHT MY FIRST HOUSE WITH IT."

BALLARD REMAINS best-known as the writer of three enduring monsters of rock radio, Kiss's 'God Gave Rock & Roll To You II' and Rainbow's 'Since You Been Gone' and 'I Surrender'. But a career that began at the age of 15 with Buster Meikle And The Daybreakers has also encompassed 10 solo albums, a long-standing collaboration with Roger Daltrey, a stint in Argent and a catalogue of songs that has provided hits across the world for artists as diverse as Hot Chocolate, Agnetha Fältskog, Santana, Three Dog Night, Ace Frehley, The Pointer Sisters and America.

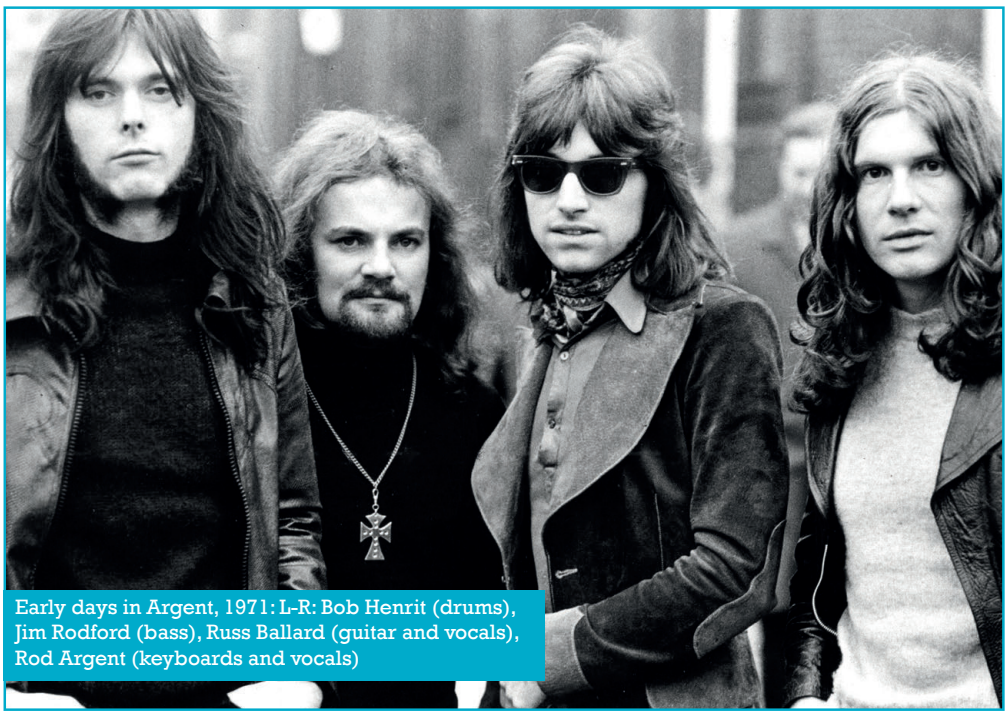
He's in the process of writing a memoir and he reads me part of the opening passage from his laptop screen: "I was born 11.30 on the 31 October 1945. My mum said I didn't stop crying for six months. I probably had a premonition of the world I'd been born into. I think for my mum and dad, the war had just started."

His father was a drummer in a dance band and a canny entrepreneur who turned the small family home into a grocery shop. His mother was a dancer. Ballard remembers sitting between his father's knees as he played at dances at the Imperial Hall in Waltham Cross: "I just loved it, it was like magic..." There was an upright piano in the house that the whole family played. Russ and his brother Roy, older by four years, were dispatched for lessons to Mr Bentley, "and even at that age I could pick out things on the piano, find the notes and ►

play a tune by ear. And when I went to the guitar at the age of 12 I could recognise that a fret was a semi-tone on the piano."

His other great love was football, and at 12 years old he was told he would probably become a professional. But then, a week into the school summer holiday, his life changed forever.

"We would spend hours playing football, 11 or 12 of us, we'd be out all day. I never knew who was going to call round at the house for me, because I had a lot of friends. On the day of the accident, I was wearing black and white striped jeans, hair greased up. I wanted to be a Teddy Boy. These four boys called around. They were all older than me. I remember all of their names. We were going to go up to Temple Bar Woods, which was a beautiful spot not too far away from where I lived. Someone produced a slug gun. Another one had a catapult. I could feel something was going to kick off, and then suddenly I was hit. Hit in the eye. I don't know if it was deliberate. I was lying on the ground. I knew that I was blind as soon as I was hit."



Early days in Argent, 1971: L-R: Bob Henrit (drums), Jim Rodford (bass), Russ Ballard (guitar and vocals), Rod Argent (keyboards and vocals)

The biggest of the boys carried Ballard home. His parents had no idea at first how badly he was injured.

"They'd told me to keep away from those boys, but I liked their company. They were dangerous. I remember my dad was playing the piano, and I said, 'Dad, that's going right through my head'."

The family doctor came and sent him to the local accident and emergency department and he ended up in a car being taken to Moorfields Eye Hospital in London, where he woke the next morning with both his eyes covered. He stayed that way for eight days.

"It was traumatic. I couldn't get up or walk around. It changed my life."

Over the next two years Russ had three operations, the last of them to try to replace the lens in his damaged eye, but doctors were unable to save it. His footballing dream was over.

"Danny Blanchflower, who was the captain of Spurs at the time, sent me a copy of his book with a lovely letter. I still have it upstairs. It said, 'When the guys at Spurs get a whack, we say, "Don't worry, it'll feel better in 20 years."'He was just trying to make me feel better, you know. He said, 'We hope to see you back on the field at Cheshunt soon.'

"I was an extrovert right up until the age of 12. I stopped playing football because I was scared of getting hit in the other eye. I became an introvert. They didn't have counselling back then. I think I took a lot of emotion in and found a way to get through, and a lot of it was playing the guitar. I started learning solos (he peels off a note-perfect 'Be-Bop-A-Lula' as an illustration) and it was a distraction from other stuff."

AT 15 Ballard began working his way through East Hertfordshire's rock'n'roll scene, teaming up with his brother and a drummer, Bob Henrit, in Buster Meikle and the Daybreakers. They were spotted by the singer Helen Shapiro, whose producer Norrie Paramor took the band into Abbey Road studio two for, "a sound test, he called it. I had to take the day off school..." That opportunity fizzled, but Ballard soon had his first full pro gig, following Henrit into Adam Faith's backing band, the Roulettes. Faith was at the peak of his teen idol phase, after a run of seven Top Five hit singles. Ballard spent a weekend at Faith's mansion in Esher and began to see how the other half lived. Faith, who was 22 at the time, had a butler, a maid, and a Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud.

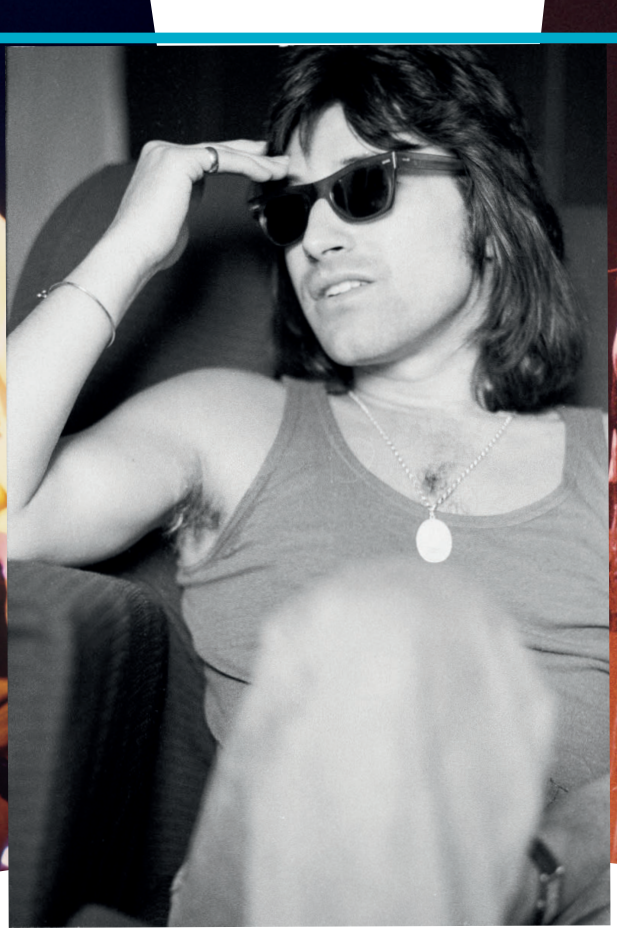
The nascent rock'n'roll scene was small. Most of Faith's gigs were on variety shows and involved, "a comic, a female vocalist and then a juggler or something, then we'd come on at about a thousand decibels so we could be heard over the screaming girls... We went on two or three TV shows a week, too."

Ballard had already written his first song, an instrumental take-off of the Shadows called 'Atlantis', a tune he'd demoed at a studio in Denmark Street before joining the Roulettes. He came back home from a week on the road with Adam three years later to find that his mum had taken a call from the Shadows' publishing company saying that the band had recorded his tune, but he needed to change its name because they already had a song called 'Atlantis'. He picked 'The Lost City', and it became his first credit.

THE CULTURE accelerated away. The difference between 1965 and 1967 was huge, as was the leap into 1969. Ballard migrated from Adam Faith's variety act (as did Faith, who moved towards acting, scoring a big UK television hit with *Budgie*), in part because his guitar

Photos: Getty Images/Gijsbert Hanekroot/Redferns; Getty Images/Fin Costello; Getty Images/Michael Putland

Playing live with Argent. "I should have stretched out more, because I can stretch out"



Interesting stage gear there, Russ...

playing was deteriorating as he cranked out simple pop hits every night. In the autumn of 1968, Ballard and Bob Henrit hooked up with keyboard player Rod Argent, who'd become a star in The Zombies and was now putting together his own, more ambitious band, one whose sound would fit with the burgeoning, blossoming rock landscape.

"I really respected Rod, loved his playing and he already had about 10 songs, most of which ended up on the first album," Ballard says. "He said to me, 'Why don't you write some songs for the band too?' I'd been writing at home. I'd always written on the piano, I still do in fact. But I'd write anything; show tunes, rag time, so this was something new."

For Argent's debut, Ballard wrote 'Liar', 'Schoolgirl' and 'Lonely Hard Road', and when the record came out in January 1970 they headed to America. It was a truly counter-cultural shock...

"Over here you never had late-night TV," he recalls. "The first night in America I stayed up all night... it was *The Late Show*; *The Late, Late Show*; *The Late, Late, Late Show*... New York scared me a little bit to be honest. We got up next morning and went for breakfast. We queued up with these builders at a diner, the guy behind the counter is screaming at you, 'WHADDYA WANT?' It came to me, I said, 'I'll have egg on toast please...' 'HOW DO YOU WANT YOUR EGGS?' I didn't know you could do so many things with eggs, you know... 'SUNNY SIDE UP? OVER EASY? C'MON MAN...'"

They travelled the country, played the Fillmore East with The Moody Blues. The world had shifted and suddenly musicianship was the thing.

> "PEOPLE STARTED ASKING ME FOR SONGS. BUT WHAT YOU MUSTN'T DO IS TRY TO RECREATE SOMETHING YOU'VE ALREADY DONE. YOU'VE JUST GOT TO WAIT AND LET IT HAPPEN. YOU'D FIND THAT LITTLE BIT OF GRIT IN THE PEARL THAT MAKES THE OYSTER. BUT YOU NEVER KNEW WHEN IT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN, WHICH WAS FRUSTRATING."

"Everyone was doing that, 20-minute versions of 'I Heard It Through The Grapevine' and things like that. Rod was very good at being the main soloist, but I'd lost a lot of confidence. I should have stretched out more, because I can stretch out, but I was holding myself back all the time. Probably only halfway through Argent I started getting more confident and playing more guitar."

WHAT RUSS could do, though, was write, sometimes three or four songs in a day. While the initial couple of Argent albums didn't find the mark commercially, 'Liar', the first song he'd written for the band, was covered by an American act, Three Dog Night.

"Yeah, my first hit wasn't a hit here," he remembers. "It was a hit in America. I thought it had a good lyric, but didn't think it was commercial. I wrote it going up to the session, had the blues lick, and it had the element of surprise about the lyric. But I thought it was going to blow Three Dog Night's career, because it wasn't commercial.

"I remember the publisher Joe Roncoroni phoned me and said, 'It's gone in at [number] 72...' I thought, 'Is that good?' But the next week it's 36, week after it's gone from 36 to 18... Up and up it went. I actually cried, I felt so emotional. I was 26. I'd been writing since I was 14 and I had a hit.

"I didn't have any money. We could see the song going up in the chart and when it went Top 10, Joe Roncoroni said to me, 'You're going to be a very rich young man.' I thought, 'That'll be alright.' First cheque I got, remember this is 1971, first cheque was for 10 grand. And I also got the PRS on top of that, about the same again. I bought my first house with it. My girlfriend gave me an ultimatum, 'either we get a house or I leave you.' But I'm glad she did..."

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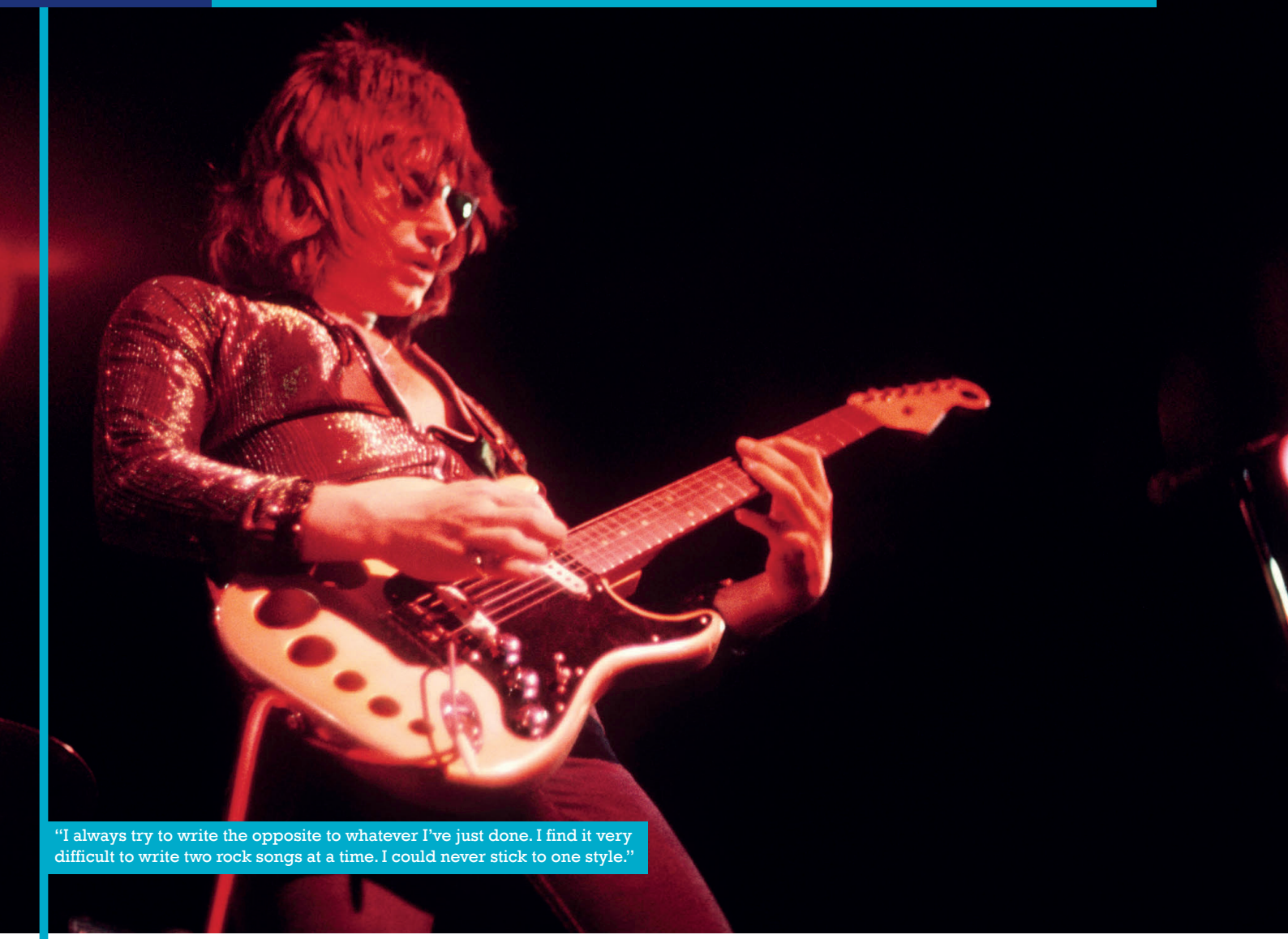


"I always try to write the opposite to whatever I've just done. I find it very difficult to write two rock songs at a time. I could never stick to one style."

ARGENT'S THIRD album, 1972's 'All Together Now', yielded them a first hit too, 'Hold Your Head Up', a song written by Rod Argent and former Zombies bassist Chris White, but sung by Ballard.

He apparently had it all now, success and stardom in a band, and a lucrative second career in writing. And yet he was suffering from depression, not helped by the lifestyle he led, burning the candle at both ends. With the perspective of time, he's clear about the cause of it.

"Being hit in the eye. I think it was delayed all that time. It's one of the things you learn to live with and I pushed it down, but it had to come out. I was 26 and you think about the dreaded 27 in rock'n'roll, it's the same sort of thing. It must be something about that age, something about the make-up of the human being. Depression is a bit like a living nightmare. I wrote a song called 'I Don't Believe In Miracles' just as it was starting, and it sounds like a cry for help. It was a hit for Colin Blunstone. I just kept working, didn't miss a tour or a show, kept writing.

"The song I wrote as I came out of the depression was 'God Gave Rock And Roll To You'. We'd done an Argent tour and I was depressed all the way through it. And I started to come out of it and I just wrote these lines, '*Love your friend, love your neighbour, love your life, love your labour, it's never too late to change your mind...*' Eventually Kiss, when they covered it, they left out that part and kept the rest, but if you find something you can write about, if you find that lyric that people can put emotion into, you can find a chord, a certain chord, and it's like, yeah..."

"I GET MORE SYNCS ON 'NEW YORK GROOVE' IN AMERICA THAN ANY OTHER SONG. AND IT'S BECAUSE IT'S GOT NEW YORK IN THE TITLE. EVERY YEAR I PROBABLY GET THREE OR FOUR SYNCS OF IT, AND THEY'RE ALL UPWARDS OF 25 GRAND. I GET THAT EVERY YEAR, AND I WROTE IT IN 1975..."

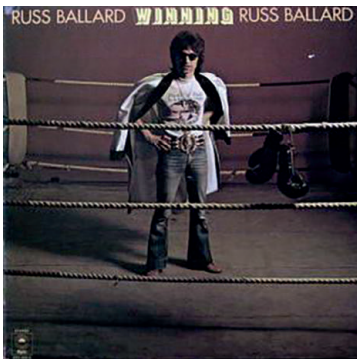
Though he didn't know it at the time, 'God Gave Rock And Roll To You' was money in the bank. This was the life of the songwriter, building up a catalogue of material that may or may not pay off, now or in the future. After another record with Argent, his wife Janet became pregnant with their first child, Christian, "and I thought that the band was getting a bit too jazzy live, too many organ solos, so I decided to leave. I'd thought about getting a new band together, but once Christian came along I couldn't bear the thought of not being there. So I signed a new publishing deal, which gave me some

Photo: Getty Images/John Lynn Kirk/Redferns

money, and I made a solo album for CBS."

It was the first of a series of records that, although not major hits in their own right, were little goldmines on the songwriting side. Half of the 10 songs on Ballard's second solo outing, 1976's 'Winning', were covered by other artists, from the Bay City Rollers to Santana, who had a US hit with the title track.

"I think it put a bit of pressure on my songwriting," Ballard says of the recognition that quickly started coming his way. "People started asking me for songs. But what you mustn't do is try to recreate something you've already done. You've just got to wait and let it happen. I tried to work this out. I used to go in early in the morning and work through. And there would be times in the day where you would work through your down moments and suddenly it would happen really, really good. You'd find that little bit of grit in the pearl that makes the oyster. But you never knew when it was going to happen, which was frustrating."



RUSS'S GOLDEN rule that he was not going to repeat himself was perhaps the secret to being covered in so many different genres. 'So You Win Again' was a classic example. Ballard heard it as a blue-eyed soul song in the style of Hall & Oates, and demoed it that way. And yet when it became a hit it was for Hot Chocolate, their only UK number one.

"'When I sit at the piano and write, I always try to write the opposite to whatever I've just done," he says. "So if I've done a rock song, the next thing may be very uplifting and tender. I find it very difficult to write two rock songs at a time. I could never stick to one style.

"And when you've got something like, '*So you win again, here I stand again, the loser...*' you got that minor chord right on the '*loser*' line..." Ballard explains. "When you find the chemistry of the right lyric hitting the right chord you get a chill. We're all human organisms and we feel the same things. If you get the chill writing it, someone else will get the chill listening. And until you get it, it's really not worth writing the song. My first American publisher, Al Gallico, used to say 'Russ, it's the song and the performance...' Not the production and stuff, and I found that to be true.

"I obviously wanted to write more hit songs, and there was a gap in the market. Making solo albums was a better way of doing it than making demos and hoping someone was gonna hear them and record them. When I eventually wrote 'Since You Been Gone' and 'I Surrender', heavy bands like Purple and Rainbow were either doing riffs or they were doing ethereal, big ballads. There was no one doing pop rock songs. My writing always had that rock element to it, even with 'Liar', so I found something that was kind of mine."

'Since You Been Gone' was another of the songs from 'Winning'.

"Rainbow did the right version as far as I'm concerned," he says of a hit that would fulfil Ritchie Blackmore's ambition for commercial as well as critical success. "Because I wrote it on piano I made the piano the lead instrument on my version. I remember, I was in the garden, 1979, I had some music playing, a lovely sunny day, and the DJ said, in at number whatever... Rainbow... And it was my song. And I thought, 'Good sound!'"

Ballard had happened on something that was beginning to manifest on both sides of the Atlantic in the late 1970s – commercial hard rock made for radio, a sound coalescing around bands like REO Speedwagon, Toto, Foreigner and Journey. It was the start of another golden period for him, with 'I Surrender' providing Rainbow's biggest UK chart hit two years later, just as Ballard was asked to help resurrect another radio rock staple, America, a band best known for 'Horse With No Name' and 'Ventura Highway', songs that dripped with early-'70s nostalgia.

"I don't think I even sent 'I Surrender' to Rainbow. My publisher sent it," he recalls. "I'd done two songs at that demo session, 'I Surrender' and another song called 'Madeleine'. And they liked that song, but Ritchie said he didn't want to do a song with a girl's name in it..."

America was a more bespoke task. "I thought they should go back to that real hypnotic feel of 'Horse With No Name', he says, "and I had this piano part that became 'You Can Do Magic'."

It was a huge 1982 comeback hit that triggered another, 'The Border', from the follow-up album, 'Your Move', the next year. At the same time Ballard was writing for the solo records of both of Abba's female singers, Agnetha Fältskog and Frida Lyngstad, and, at the other end of the scale, for Roger Daltrey, who was at the peak of his own solo career with the film *McVicar* and its soundtrack album.

"I should have spent more time on Roger," Ballard says. "I did a tour with him, East Coast of America, which was brilliant. But when you go on with Roger, the crowd just go 'Who... Who...' So he said, I'm gonna do 'I Can't Explain', 'Won't Get Fooled Again' and that's it. By the end, though, we were doing 'Substitute', 'Pictures of Lily'..."

ONCE AGAIN, Ballard battled the demands of his career with the pull of family, now augmented by his daughter Karis. He made more solo records, too. "I should have gone on the road and toured," he says in hindsight. "But I started to go to America to write ►

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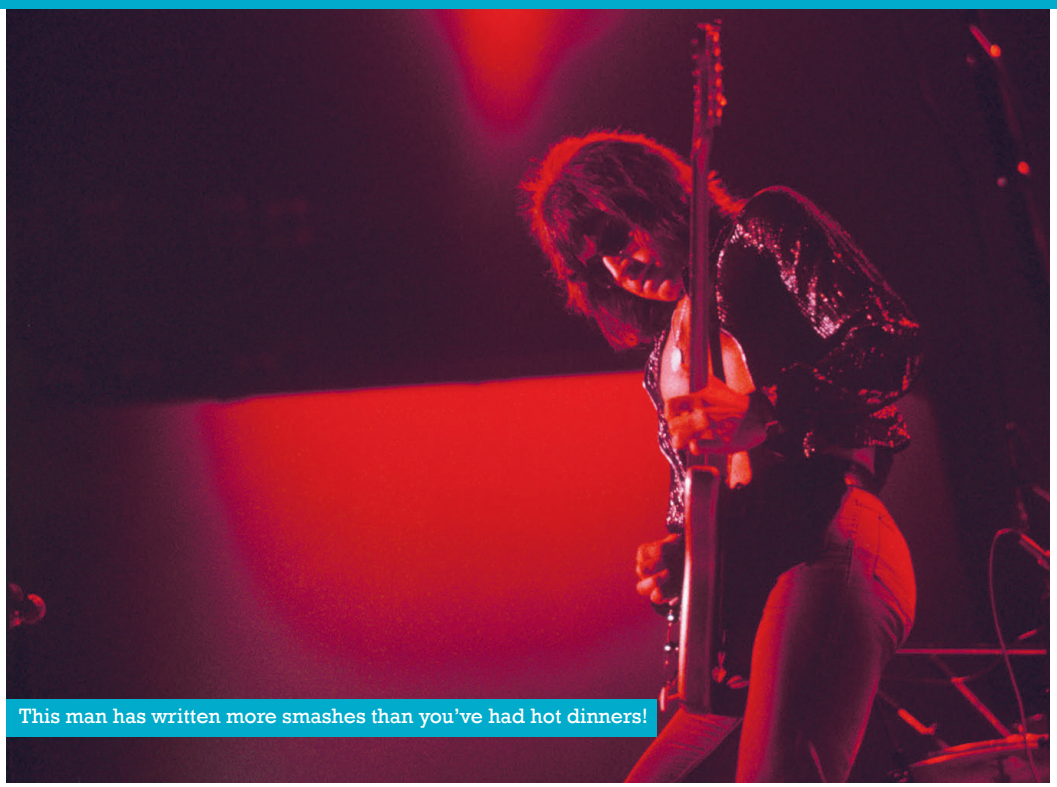


This man has written more smashes than you've had hot dinners!

with people. I wrote with John Waite, I was going to write with Ozzy. But I used to phone home every evening and my son would say, 'When are you coming back?' and I'd die a little bit. I didn't have to go out, financially, and it would have broken my heart."

While he kept working, Russ's songs lived their own, unpredictable lives. Ace Frehley had scored a solo hit in 1978 with 'New York Groove', a tune Ballard had written three years earlier after the title came to him on a transatlantic flight. The song worked its way into Kiss's set list and put him on the band's radar, and in 1991, they took 'God Gave Rock And Roll To You', added a 'II' to the title and leant it to the soundtrack of the hit movie *Bill And Ted's Bogus Journey*. A song that Ballard had written as he emerged from depression as a 26-year-old suddenly became a rock radio staple and a cornerstone of latter-period Kiss, one of the few songs from the non-make-up period to have survived in their live set.

It's a precarious way to make a living, but writing songs has been lucrative for someone as productive as Russ Ballard. Along with the record sales, and the PRS, ASCAP and BMI payments given every time a work is played on radio or television, songwriters also receive income from material used in adverts, TV shows and films, known in the business as 'syncs'.

"I get more syncs on 'New York Groove' in America than any other song," Ballard says. "And it's because it's got New York in the title. Every year I probably get three or four syncs of it, and they're all upwards of 25 grand. I get that every year, and I wrote it in 1975..."

"They all fluctuate in price. For example, it can be 20 grand in a film, or it can be something like 250 grand. I had one in an advert for Deutsche Bank, they had the Bayern Munich football team getting onto a coach, just a backing track going round and round and round. I got €250,000 for that..."

AFTER LUNCH Russ and I retreat to his music room, where he sits at the piano and runs through 'Since You Been Gone', 'So You Win Again' and 'You Can Do Magic', explaining how chords sit together and marry with the lyrics, how he uses phrasing and melody to make the lyrical idea work. It's a masterclass in technique and creativity, and it's obvious that Ballard is still just as compelled to write now as he was at 14. He's just returned from some shows in Portugal, where he tailored a set list from songs that have been hits in Europe, and he's considering writing a song for a boy band that his producer son Christian has found. He smiles as he says that he may even write something new for Ritchie Blackmore.

"I went up to see Rainbow a couple of years ago, at the 02 [in London]. I was in the stalls watching the soundcheck. Ritchie didn't know I was there. I walked over, and he said, 'So what are you going to do?' And I said, 'Well, in his email your manager suggested I should do 'Since You Been Gone'.' He replied, 'But we only do the middle of it. And we don't do the solo.'" Ballard smiles. "I said, 'No solo. Why's that?' Ritchie says, 'Well, it's in a major key and you can't play in a major key, can you? It's like country music...'

"He was waiting to go on, he was being very nice. He was telling the other guys, 'If you want a hit you've either got to go on the road, or get this guy to write you a song...' Which was very nice of him. I said to him, 'Do you want me to write you a new song?' He said, 'Yep'. I said, 'Do you want rock or medieval?' And he looked at me, stroking his chin, and he went... 'Medieval'..."

> "I'M USUALLY UP EARLY, BETWEEN FIVE AND SIX, THEN I WALK 50 YARDS TO THE STUDIO AND I'M AT WORK. I STILL GET SUCH A KICK OUT OF IT, YOU KNOW..."

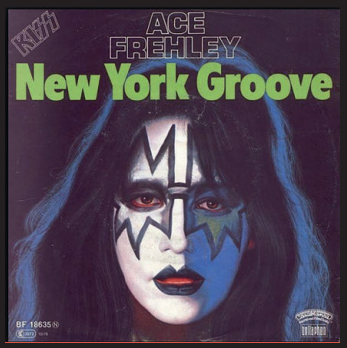
When Rainbow played their abbreviated version of 'Since You Been Gone' that night Ballard thought he'd just go on and wave, but as he stepped out, a roadie handed him a guitar. "I'm not even sure it was plugged in," he smiles. "But that's Ritchie, you know. He's a bit of a joker..."

Ballard laughs at the memory. Very little bothers him now. "I don't regret anything," he says. He's even playing football again, this time with his grandson, who has a mini-pitch set up on the front lawn of the house. "I'm usually up early, between five and six, then I walk 50 yards to the studio..." he gestures across the patio and the swimming pool, "and I'm at work. I still get such a kick out of it, you know..."

Photo: Getty Images/David Warner Ellis/Redferns

BALLARD'S BABIES!

THE BIZARRE LIVES OF FIVE OF RUSS'S HITS...



'NEW YORK GROOVE'
Written in: 1975
Originally on: Hello's 1976 album, 'Keeps Us Off The Streets'.
Recorded by: Hello (1975), Ace Frehley (1978), Kiss (live, 1996), Sweet (2012).
Random facts: Kiss guitarist Frehley's version, laid down for his solo record (one of four released by each member of Kiss on 18 September 1978) was, he claimed, inspired by hookers in Times Square. The song was included on the Japanese version of the Kiss live album 'You Wanted the Best, You Got the Best!!' in 1996. Frehley's cover has been used in nine different films and multiple TV shows. Hello's version, meanwhile, appears in the video game *Grand Theft Auto IV*.

'LIAR'
Written in: 1970
Originally on: Argent's eponymous 1970 debut.
Recorded by: Three Dog Night (1971), Capability Brown (1972), The Meters (1975), Graham Bonnet (1981).
Random facts: 'Liar' was Argent's first ever single, one of just three Ballard compositions that appeared on 'Argent'. Ballard took the lead vocal on the song, but it failed to chart. Three Dog Night's cover peaked at number seven in the US and number four in Canada, and has subsequently appeared on each of their four greatest hits collections. Bonnet's version appeared on his third solo album, the all-star 'Line-Up' from 1981, which also included another Ballard song, 'S.O.S'.

'GOD GAVE ROCK AND ROLL TO YOU'
Written in: 1971
Originally on: Argent's 1973 album, 'In Deep'.
Recorded by: Argent, Petra (twice, 1977 and 1985), Kiss (1991), Unrest (1992), Bride (1994).
Random facts: Argent recorded the song for their 1972 album release 'All Together Now', but held it over until their next record, 'In Deep'. Christian rock band Petra were the first to slightly adapt the lyrics, as did Kiss, who modelled their version on Petra's. For the version used in the film *Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey* Steve Vai plays a 40 second guitar solo. It's the last Kiss song to feature the late Eric Carr, who contributed backing vocals (but not drums) shortly before his death in 1991.

'I KNOW THERE'S SOMETHING GOING ON'
Written in: 1981
Recorded by: Frida (1982), Co.Ro. (1993), N'Time (1998), Bomfunk MC (2002), Luxxury (2006), Tre Lux (2006), Wild Frontier (2007), Sleepthief (2009), Overdrive (2011), Jorn (2016)
Random facts: Abba's Frida had a hit across Europe and America with the song, including number ones in France, Belgium, Switzerland and Costa Rica. Her version of the song was produced by Phil Collins, who also played drums on the track. It's become one of Ballard's most covered tunes and has also been sampled by several hip-hop artists including Salt-N-Pepa and K-OS.

'SINCE YOU BEEN GONE'
Written in: 1976
Originally on: Russ's 1976 solo album 'Winning'.
Recorded by: Clout (1978), Head East (1978), Rainbow (1979), Cherie and Marie Currie (1980), Alcatrazz (live, 1984), Impellitteri (1988), Brian May (live, 1993).
Random facts: Though most people immediately associate the song with Rainbow, 'Since You Been Gone' was actually a bigger hit in America for Head East (reaching number 46) than it was for Rainbow (where it only got to number 57). Rainbow's version features on a famous 2009 T-Mobile advert where rail commuters in London's Liverpool Street Station were greeted by a flash mob of dancers disguised as regular customers breaking into a coordinated routine. Graham Bonnet must love the song – he's recorded it with three different bands.

RATT photographed in 1984. L-R: Juan Croucier (bass), Bobby Blotzer (drums), Stephen Pearcy (vocals), Robbin Crosby (guitar), Warren DeMartini (guitar)

RATT 'OUT OF THE CELLAR'

DATELINE: 27 MARCH 1984

RATT WEREN'T AS FAST OUT OF THE TRAPS AS THEIR FRIENDS AND FELLOW SUNSET STRIPPERS MÖTLEY CRÜE. BUT WHEN THEY FINALLY RELEASED THEIR DEBUT ALBUM IN 1984 IT WAS AN IMMEDIATE HIT. HOW DOES IT SOUND 35 YEARS LATER?

RATT
'Out Of The Cellar' (Atlantic)
Released: 27 March 1984

LINE UP
STEPHEN PEARCY – lead vocals
ROBBIN CROSBY – lead and rhythm guitar, backing vocals
WARREN DEMARTINI – lead and rhythm guitar, backing vocals
JUAN CROUCIER – bass guitar, backing vocals
BOBBY BLOTZER – drums, percussion

PRODUCED BY
Beau Hill
RECORDED AT
Village Recorder and Sound City Studios, Los Angeles, California

TRACK LISTING
Wanted Man (Robbin Crosby, Stephen Pearcy, Joey Cristofanilli)
You're In Trouble (Warren DeMartini, Stephen Pearcy, Robbin Crosby)
Round And Round (Warren DeMartini, Stephen Pearcy, Robbin Crosby)
In Your Direction (Stephen Pearcy)
She Wants Money (Juan Croucier)
Lack Of Communication (Juan Croucier, Stephen Pearcy)
Back For More (Stephen Pearcy, Robbin Crosby)
The Morning After (Warren DeMartini, Stephen Pearcy, Robbin Crosby)
I'm Insane (Robbin Crosby)
Scene Of The Crime (Robbin Crosby, Juan Croucier)

STEPHEN PEARCY ON 'OUT OF THE CELLAR': "On this album we were all pulling together. There was a real belief in what we were doing and that shines through here more than it ever did again. It's our best album."

THE INFAMOUS LA HAIR metal scene of the early to mid-'80s threw up lots of bands that seemed to have paid very few dues before being signed by major label A&R departments. The professional starmakers were under heavy pressure not to miss out on the next band capable of selling multi-millions in those halcyon days, and that led to acts being signed to majors well before they were ready. RATT, however, was not one of those bands.

The group's roots went way back to 1973 when California native Stephen Pearcy first began singing in a group called Firedome. After any number of false starts, by 1981 Pearcy's band Mickey Ratt had morphed into RATT, having acted as a staging post for plenty of LA's wannabe rock musicians. The line-up that would record this, the band's debut album, first came together in 1982, at a point when Mötley Crüe had already released their indie debut album, 'Too Fast For Love'. By the time RATT released their own debut recording – a six-track EP on the independent Time Coast Music label in 1983 – they were playing catch-up. Pearcy was 27 years old, and when Atlantic finally signed the band and 'Out Of The Cellar' was ready to go, the Crüe were already shifting serious units. Had RATT missed the boat? Could a band that had been 10 years in the making hit the ground running with the required youthful energy? 'Out Of Cellar' would provide answers to those questions.

RATT performing on the 'Out Of The Cellar' tour: "The right commercial stuff for the times."

THE FIRST smart move Atlantic Records made was to engage Beau Hill as producer. A musician himself (Airborne, Spider, Shanghai) though a relative production novice, Hill's commercial ear helped to refine and redefine the band's blues-based hard rock style for radio. Much of the hype that surrounded RATT when they first signed to Atlantic was that they were the new Aerosmith. In retrospect this was probably more to do with the fact that the Boston band were in turmoil and there was a gap in the market for a sleazy-sounding hard rock act. RATT threw in the occasional nod to Perry and Tyler, but their sound was much more tailored toward '80s rock radio and MTV. There is no better example of that on 'Out Of The Cellar' than 'Round And Round', a song built around a slick melody, a bountiful riff and a concise guitar solo from Warren DeMartini. It immediately grasped America's attention and became a Top 20 hit, helping drive the album's sales to triple platinum status.

But it wasn't the only track with the right commercial stuff for the times. Opener 'Wanted Man' won hearts and minds as a mid-paced, sneering anthem that perfectly suited Stephen Pearcy's vocal delivery. Never a great singer, Pearcy could always instil something dangerous into a track, and that soon became part of RATT's musical persona. 'You're In Trouble', meanwhile, features the kind of gang vocals and mid-tempo nodability that came to define the band's sound. It's easy to see how RATT's music worked so well on US radio, sticking to a winning formula of memorable riffs, sing-along melodies and structures that never went off at a tangent.

LYRICALLY, THERE'S some social commentary on 'Lack Of Communication' as Pearcy hisses, *"Too many problems, the world can't solve/Too many people, no one wants to be involved"*. But the majority of the words deal with themes the band would doubtless have known well from their days struggling on The Strip. 'Back For More' talks of a girl on the make who has the rich boyfriend, yet can't help wanting a rocker too. 'She Wants Money', meanwhile, lays bare the sort of women the band were clearly hanging out with in those formative days. More alarmingly, perhaps, given what the future held, is 'I'm Insane', written by guitarist Robbin Crosby alone. *"I'm off my rocker/I fell out of my tree/I've been standin' on shaky ground/There's no helping me."* Given Crosby's rapid descent into drug addiction and death from AIDS-related pneumonia and a heroin overdose at the age of just 42, the song's somewhat flippant lyrics now take on some real poignancy.

THERE'S A MOMENTUM TO THE PERFORMANCES THAT FEELS BOTH LIVE AND LITHE, GIVING AN ALLURING, IRRESISTIBLE FLOW TO THE MUSIC.

DESPITE BEING an album that's remembered as 'of its time', 'Out Of The Cellar' still sounds as impressive as it did in 1984. Commercially it was a huge success, selling over three million copies in America alone, and reaching number seven in the US chart. And there's a momentum to the performances that feels both live and lithe, giving an alluring, irresistible flow to the music. Taking into account RATT's overall career, it's fair to say it's 'Out Of The Cellar' that best represents what this band is about: low rent arrogance with some surprisingly erudite music.

There were decent enough musicians in the group, though only DeMartini could pretend to virtuoso status. But as 'Out Of The Cellar' proved, the whole was greater than the sum of the parts. Beau Hill did good work on the production and although things were to subsequently turn sour between him and the band after three more albums, here you can sense there was a real rapport.

It wouldn't get any better than this for RATT, and never again would they manage to record an album of such consistent hard rock. But as legacies of the '80s metal scene go, 'Out Of The Cellar' is right up there.

MALCOLM DOME

THE ORIGINAL REVIEW

"RATT don't like to hang about wimping out when there's another adrenalin rush of riffing just around the corner, and the energy they pack into this neatly disguised sonic letterbomb is surely destined to reap them rich rewards."
– Paul Suter, *Kerrang!*, 22 March–4 April, 1984

'OUT OF THE CELLAR' FACT: The girl crawling about on the cover of 'Out Of The Cellar' is none other than Tawny Kitaen, the future Mrs David Coverdale, who was dating Robbin Crosby at the time. She also featured in the video for 'Back For More'.

Photos: Getty Images/Ebet Roberts/Redferns; Julia Goode

STRIKTLY FOR KONNOISSEURS

MONSTER ROCK ALBUMS FOR THOSE WHO NEED TO GO DEEPER

QUEENSRŸCHE – 'Rage For Order' (EMI)

ORIGINAL RELEASE DATE – 1986

LINE UP
GEOFF TATE – LEAD VOCALS, KEYBOARDS
CHRIS DEGARMO – GUITARS
MICHAEL WILTON – GUITARS
EDDIE JACKSON – BASS, BACKING VOCALS
SCOTT ROCKENFIELD – DRUMS

THE ORIGINS OF QUEENSRŸCHE date back to the late '70s when a diverse bunch of aspiring Seattle metal musicians eventually coagulated around a group called The Mob. Guitarists Chris DeGarmo and Michael Wilton, bassist Eddie Jackson and drummer Scott Rockenfield worked with vocalist Geoff Tate for a while, but he left to join another act, Myth, after laying down vocals on a 1981 The Mob demo. After endless record company rejections and a name change to Queensrÿche, the band released four demo tracks as an independent EP, which was enthusiastically received by influential metal mag *Kerrang!* By the summer of 1983 Tate was back in the ranks and the band had a seven-album deal with major label EMI in their collective back pockets.

QUEENSRŸCHE HEADED to England to record their debut album with producer James Guthrie, noted for his work with Pink Floyd, but the resulting album, 1984's 'The Warning', failed to deliver. Nonetheless, EMI were firmly behind Queensrÿche and the band snagged coveted opening slots for Kiss and Iron Maiden before turning their thoughts to a second album. A fast-rising producer called Neil Kernon got the production gig and recording began in 1985, originally in Seattle, then at Mushroom Studios in Vancouver, Canada. It was here that the team forged the heart of 'Rage For Order', in the process creating a blueprint for what would become the progressive metal style. Queensrÿche not only overhauled their sound, but also their image. The studs and denim look from the debut album was replaced by an over-the-top futuristic styling that certainly raised eyebrows. Lyrically, things were also evolving as the band started exploring socio-political and personal issues.

MORE THAN 30 years after the event, one listen to 'Rage For Order's crushing opening number, 'Walk In The Shadows', is enough to show the album is a real step forward from 'The Warning'. The songs come across as layered and complex, light years ahead of a predecessor that sounds like a cheap demo in comparison. With DeGarmo and Wilton working together intuitively, Queensrÿche's music was far removed from the lumpen heavy metal of the day. Not only did they look like they were from the future, they sounded like it too.

HIGHLIGHTS? THE chilling 'Gonna Get Close To You', where Geoff Tate plays the part of a menacing stalker on a song that was originally written by the Canadian singer Lisa Dalbello. 'Neue Regel', which starts with a delicate acoustic guitar before mixing some taut riffs and soaring solos together with a Geoff Tate vocal *tour de force*. 'I Dream In Infrared', meanwhile, sees the band pulling back the intensity a notch and 'I Will Remember' also closes out the album in reflective style.

Picking highlights perhaps does the extremely consistent 'Rage For Order' a disservice, though. It's true that Queensrÿche went on to bigger and better things with their next album, 1988's monumental 'Operation: Mindcrime'. But in my opinion 'Rage For Order' was the blueprint from which they would build an empire.

Rob Evans

BUDGIE
– 'If I Were Brittania I'd Waive The Rules' (A&M)
ORIGINAL RELEASE DATE – 1976

LINE UP
BURKE SHELLEY – BASS, VOCALS
TONY BOURGE – GUITAR
STEVE WILLIAMS – DRUMS
RICHARD DUNN – KEYBOARDS

THERE CAN'T BE MANY acts out there with as strange and downright unfair a career as funk and riff-meisters Budgie. The finest non-fossil fuel export Wales has ever produced were undoubted rock geniuses, but commercial success eluded them and the legacy they left behind is minor. Was it the questionable band name? Or perhaps the fact that the trio – supplemented here by keyboardist Richard Dunn – were as photogenic as the front row forwards of a local rugby club? Who really knows? But what is absolutely certain is that to the headbanging *cognoscenti* Budgie had no equal.

WITH HIS outsized spectacles and witch's hair, frontman Burke Shelley might not have looked like a typical '70s rock god. But with a voice full of soulful power and a funky bass playing technique, Shelley really was a legend. His avowed love of funk and soul would ensure that Budgie were never caged by conventions of the rock genre. Shelley formed a long musical partnership with mercurial guitarist Tony Bourge, who could turn from razor-taloned bird of prey into a mellifluous songbird in the blink of an eye. And augmented by a succession of inventive drummers, Budgie was no ordinary power trio.

The band were signed to MCA in 1971, and released five classic albums. But bar a couple of Top 50 chart placings with 1974's 'In For The Kill' and the following year's 'Bandolier', commercial success was fleeting. MCA eventually threw in the towel, leaving the band to fly off to A&M. Their sixth album, with its laborious and misspelled title 'If I Were Brittania I'd Waive The Rules', was the first of a brace of albums for their new label.

OPENER 'ANNE Neggen' finds Shelley with his tongue firmly in his cheek on this wittily titled repetitive riff rocker that seems to have a gentle dig at Status Quo. "*And again*." Geddit? As if to show off their diversity, Budgie then produce a minor epic on the following title track, incorporating both prog rock and pastoral passages into a framework that features one of Bourge's distinctive angular riffs. 'You're Opening Doors' is a delightful Shelley ballad that proves the old adage that the true quality of heavy bands is best judged by their gentle moments. And 'Quacktors And Bureaucats', which completes side one of the old vinyl experience, is full tilt heavy R&B based around a truly filthy riff.

The three-song second side of the record is just as good. 'Sky High Percentage' is old school Budgie, hanging on a blitzkrieg riff and a delightfully shredded R&B vocal. 'Heaven Knows Our Name', meanwhile, is a pretty little slowie featuring a lead vocal from Tony Bourge and some lovely guitar licks, while gargantuan album closer 'Black Velvet Stallion' finds the band once again treading a more progressive path as the song shifts through numerous moods in its eight-minutes plus.

SADLY, THIS magnificently creative record failed to produce significant commercial results, forcing Budgie to follow a far more pedestrian and generic furrow afterwards. But more than 40 years after its release this record still stands proud as a perfect example of why, for a short period of time, no one could touch Wales's finest.

Giles Hamilton

Photos: Getty Images/Paul Natkin; Getty Images/Gems/Redferns

ROCK CANDY REISSUES

THE VERY LATEST HOT RE-RELEASES FROM THE LABEL

BATON ROUGE – 'Shake Your Soul'

ORIGINAL RELEASE DATE – 1990

LINE UP
KELLY KEELING – vocals, guitar
LANCE BULEN – guitar
DAVID CREMIN – keyboards
SCOTT BENDER – bass
CORKY McCLELLAN – drums

BACKGROUND
1990 was an odd time for rock. Competition in the melodic rock arena was fierce as groups such as Tyketto, Cold Sweat, Heaven's Edge and Valentine all produced records that in another time and place might well have exploded to platinum level. But this was the dawn of grunge and dark clouds were looming overhead. Baton Rouge is a perfect example of a group that tried to establish a power base just as a sea change in public taste built a wall of indifference towards the swagger and strut of classic rock. They made some commercial progress, but ultimately fell short of expected major success.

The band, led by guitarist Lance Bulen and vocalist Kelly Keeling, formed in Louisiana during the mid-'80s and operated under a number of different names before moving to Los Angeles in 1987. Baton Rouge's manager hooked the band up with seasoned producers David Foster and Mike Clink. Clink was finishing up the Guns N' Roses 'Appetite For Destruction' debut at that point, but still found time to help Baton Rouge record a set of impressive demos. Live appearances on the LA club circuit soon attracted record company attention and the group eventually signed with Atlantic Records, where they were taken under the wing of none other than label founder Ahmet Ertegun.

'Shake Your Soul' was produced by Jack Ponti, an early Bon Jovi co-writer from New Jersey, and came out in 1990. It was critically well received, but sales were sadly disappointing.

WHAT GUITARIST LANCE BULEN SAYS
"Back then money was no object. It just kept coming. Comparatively, we got the same deal as Led Zeppelin. Hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent on us, but as we now know we were at the tail end of that era of hard rock and heavy metal. I remember how awesome it was when we broke into the *Billboard* charts. Then the record went double-breaker. The 'Walks Like A Woman' single and the album had both broken the charts [the album peaked at #160 at the end of June 1990, while the single hit #22 on the Mainstream Rock chart the same month]. All was great until Atlantic politics meant they decided to pull funds from growing bands... We could have exploded, but someone snuffed out the fuse."

TRACKS TO CHECK OUT
The album hits hard in the melodic rock style, boasting strong tracks such as 'Walks Like A Woman', 'Bad Time Comin' Down' and 'Baby's So Cool'. Think Whitesnake or Lynch Mob for a close approximation of the Baton Rouge style.

MORE BANG FOR YOUR BUCK
The Rock Candy CD is fully remastered and features a 16-page colour booklet, enhanced artwork, a new interview, rarely seen photos and a 3,500 word essay by *Rock Candy Mag*'s Dave Reynolds..

THE WORD FROM RC BOSS DEREK OLIVER
"It never ceases to amaze me that so many great albums were lost in the shuffle during the early '90s. It wasn't down to a lack of talent or vision. It was simply due to the unfortunate times these acts were living in. Baton Rouge had the heft and talent to compete with the big boys, and vocalist Kelly Keeling had a voice that fused genuine swagger with the huff and puff of a man keen to blow the roof off. With producer Jack Ponti in their corner the signs were good, but sadly lady luck had other plans for this classic, blues-based band."

GODDO – 'Goddo'

ORIGINAL RELEASE DATE – 1977

LINE UP
GREG GODOVITZ – vocals, bass
GINO SCARPELLI – guitar
DOUG INGLIS – drums

BACKGROUND
Like Max Webster and Rush, Goddo earned a reputation as one of the most magnetic and quirky Canadian bands operating in the late '70s, making full use of an off-kilter psyche and a penchant for the absurd. The man mostly responsible for this intriguing band direction was bassist and main songwriter Greg Godovitz. Like a contemporary court jester, Godovitz's brand of wit and wisdom cast a warm glow on the Canadian music scene, even if the content of Goddo albums failed to secure huge commercial rewards.

Previously, Godovitz was a member of seasoned Canadian rockers Fludd, but he departed to create a brand new vehicle for his own unique vision. Goddo was a supercharged high-octane power trio, but they weren't afraid to include elements of jazz in their sound, not to mention some crushing blues-rock.

Together with drummer Doug Inglis and guitarist Gino Scarpelli, Greg Godovitz set about laying down the first Goddo album in Montreal in 1977. They produced a record that's full of surprises, stuffed with the kind of earworm melodies that refuse to leave the brain for months – even years – after a first exposure.

Of course Godovitz is at the centre of the commotion, but Gino Scarpelli's bruising guitar plays an important part in proceedings, lending a suitably rough-hewn finish, thereby guaranteeing that no one could ever label Goddo a run of the mill rock band.

WHAT VOCALIST AND BASSIST GREG GODOVITZ SAYS
"There was this Toronto radio station called CHUM FM, and they refused

to play the single, 'Under My Hat'. So I made up a sandwich board. On one side I wrote 'CHUM FM Unfair To Local Talent', while on the other I put 'London, New York, Los Angeles Are Cities Where Legends Are Created Not Deflated'. For a few days I walked up and down outside the station's building with this placard, and it got the attention of the press. I began to get interviewed by various newspapers, who were really interested in what I was doing and the protest I was making... CHUM FM soon began to play the song on air! Believing in yourself is important."

TRACKS TO CHECK OUT
The album kicks off with the remarkable 'The Bus Driver Blues', a track with a hilarious lyric about the band's previous drummer who really did leave Goddo to drive a school bus. Other tough-nut rockers include 'Drive Me Crazy', 'Let That Lizard Loose' and 'Hard Years'.

MORE BANG FOR YOUR BUCK
The Rock Candy CD is fully remastered, and contains two bonus tracks, a 16-page colour booklet, enhanced artwork, rarely seen photos and a 3,500 word essay by *Rock Candy Mag*'s Malcolm Dome.

THE WORD FROM RC BOSS DEREK OLIVER
"Originally issued in early 1977 – when the vinyl was housed in a superbly illustrated gatefold cover fit for the times – 'Goddo' blew the roof right off and was quickly recognised as one of the very best Canadian albums of that year. The band's appealing brand of 'no messing' riff rock, mixed together with Greg Godovitz's sense of the absurd, became the year's touchstones and Canada was quick to recognise another eccentric addition to the Maple Leaf Mayhem roster. Like fellow countrymen Max Webster, Goddo's musicianship and compositional skills were simply light years ahead of the competition, helping the band to carve out a reputation that has endured among the *cognoscenti*, despite relative mainstream obscurity."

Buy these albums and tons of other great releases at *www.rockcandyrecords.com*

ROCK CANDY PICKS

THE STUFF THAT'S GRABBED OUR ATTENTION

RUSH: Song By Song Alex Body

(FONTHILL MEDIA)

WHAT'S THE STORY?
Rush have recorded an enormous amount of material over the years, so analysing every song they've ever written and recorded is a gargantuan task, to put it mildly. Step forward Alex Body, who bravely took up the gauntlet and dissects each and every composition within these pages. It's an interesting – if painstaking – way to tease out a picture of how the Canadian three-piece developed and changed across five decades.

WHAT WRITER ALEX BODY SAYS
"I have tried to follow the journey of Rush through their compositions, tracing the origins of the band's unexpected (and sometimes unpopular) changes of style, as well as highlighting the group's great achievements along the way."

BEST BITS
I guess that has to be the completist nature of the endeavour. Every single one of Rush's 19 studio albums gets an overview here – including the statistics of US, Canadian and American chart positions – before author Body gets into the analysis of each individual song. Each chapter ends with points of interest from the appropriate album sleeve.

And before you start getting panicky, all you Rush fans, there's also a final chapter dedicated to what's described as 'Live Albums, Solo Albums And Curiosities' too. So you can breathe a sigh of relief that they are covered as well.

DOES IT HIT THE SPOT?
I have to say yes. This is a very well-researched book and makes for a good read if you're a serious fan of this most famous of Canadian power trios. It's fascinating to explore how Rush managed to radically alter their sound and style across their releases. But then again, you'd expect musicians as accomplished and curious as Alex Lifeson, Geddy Lee and Neil Peart to vary their musical approach over the course of 38 years.

When you think about it, the band's last album, 2012's sophisticated 'Clockwork Angels', is barely recognisable as Rush when you compare it to the bludgeoning thump of their 1974 debut. And it's the development of the group's sound from one album to the next that makes this song-by-song approach so worthwhile, and so readable.

Malcolm Dome

VARIOUS ARTISTS 'Jobcentre Rejects Vol 2: Ultra Rare NWOBHM 1980-1985'

(ON THE DOLE)

WHAT'S THE STORY?
Released earlier this year, Volume 1 of 'Jobcentre Rejects' covered the period from 1978 to 1982 and did a fine job of exhuming long-lost material from the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal. This successor retains the same high standards with songs licensed directly from the bands – something that requires painstaking detective work.

WHAT L-P ANDERSON OF ON THE DOLE RECORDS SAYS
"The original versions of these singles have been, and remain, in strong demand among collectors. But few outside that scene know of their greatness. The stuff heard on 'Jobcentre Rejects' should appeal to everyone into any form of truly great rock'n'roll. It's a piece of British musical history that until this point hasn't been very well documented, and someone just had to do it."

ANY EXTRAS?
Not in a technical sense. But unless you're a truly obsessive collector, all 10 of these tracks could be considered as generally unavailable – and in our book that makes them all 'extras'. Aside from rescuing these songs from the scrap heap, On The Dole's high quality packaging and remastering process has done a great job of dragging them into the 21st century.

HIGHLIGHTS
If you were a NWOBHM obsessive you might remember some of these unsung heroes. Sapphire – formed by *Kerrang!* writer Steve Gett and featuring future Terraplane guitarist Rudi Riviere. The nonsensically named Bashful Alley, whose 'My My My' is a triumph of light and shade. The leaden thud of Newcastle upon Tyne's Warrior – not be confused with the US band of the same name. Portsmouth's Truffle, who deliver the muscular 'If You Really Want'. Demon Pact and the boogie riffarama of 'Eaten Alive'. And, finally, Welshmen Traitors Gate, whose musical ambition is apparent despite the DIY recording. It's deliberately obscure stuff, but that's what gives 'Jobcentre Rejects' its charm.

Dave Ling

Photos: Getty Images/Fin Costello/Redferns; IconicPix/Ray Palmer Archive

RAVEN 'Over The Top – The Neat Albums 1981-1984'

(HNE RECORDINGS)

WHAT'S THE STORY?
Proto-thrashers Raven get the four-CD box set treatment here, with this package covering the Geordie trio's early years on their local label, Neat Records. The brothers Gallagher – bassist/vocalist John and guitarist Mark – together with drummer Rob 'Wacko' Hunter recorded three classic studio albums and a double live for Neat – albums that inspired a number of American metalheads including Metallica – to start playing faster and wilder. Surely nobody can deny the origins of thrash metal can be found here!

WHAT BASSIST JOHN GALLAGHER SAYS
"On the 'All For One' album... our fans reacted really well to the new approach. I remember hearing this from Metallica when they were opening for us. They said, 'We really like the way you guys have progressed without going away from your core principles... It's still you guys, but you've broadened your horizons." And when you look at it, they did exactly the same thing with 'Kill 'Em All' and 'Ride The Lightning'."

ANY EXTRAS?
Yes. There's a hysterical studio outtake of '20/21', complete with farting effects and silly studio banter as one of 12 bonus tracks, some of which have cropped up before on various CD reissues. I don't recall seeing 'Let It Rip' or 'Power And The Glory' anywhere before, though. NWOBHM aficionado John Tucker gives you a warts-and-all Raven biography in the form of a pull-out poster!

HIGHLIGHTS
'Over The Top' sounds like Saxon on steroids, while 'Faster Than The Speed Of Light' is perfect speed metal. There's an especially potent version of the song on the double 'Live At The Inferno' album. The band shows a softer side on '39/40'. Did Metallica listen to it before writing 'Nothing Else Matters', I wonder. My favourite Raven rocker, though, has to be their rendition of the Steppenwolf classic 'Born To Be Wild', where Accept's Udo Dirkschneider shares vocal duties with John Gallagher.

Xavier Russell

KISS: The Hottest Brand in the Land Nicholas Buckland

(THREE DOT PUBLISHING)

WHAT'S THE STORY?
Here's an idea so thuddingly obvious, yet so witty and clever it's hard to believe no one has done it before: a history of Kiss told through their merchandise, with the emphasis on the 1970s and '80s when they were both commercial juggernaut and cultural phenomenon. It's a 392-page blur of images through which a lost America comes back to life. You could know nothing at all about Kiss and still enjoy this book.

WHAT AUTHOR NICHOLAS BUCKLAND, SAYS
"I decided to mainly concentrate on the rise and fall of the Aucoin merchandising era, so basically post-1976 till its lightning-fast death after the 1980 Australian tour and 'Music From The Elder'. I also wanted to give the feeling of what it would be like as a Kiss fan during this era, so the book would only contain items a Kiss fan could buy or obtain through normal means: in concert, at a store or by mail order."

BEST BITS
In a way, that's for the reader to decide. Which bit of Kiss memorabilia really does it for you? The Kiss radio, perhaps, from 1977 – a tiny portable in a cardboard sleeve, around which the hype was so great it produced a TV ad campaign? Or the 'Kiss On Tour' game – "wild and crazy fun" for children aged seven and up? Or even the 'Kiss Costume And Mask (With Hair)', which may have looked sharp in '78, but now appears more akin to something a B-movie serial killer might slip into? Whatever, this is a treasure trove of excess, thoughtfully photographed and designed.

DOES IT HIT THE SPOT?
Much of what Kiss did in the '70s and '80s looks quaint and analogue in our contemporary world of heightened reality CGI movies and immersive video games. But it's still clear why they became a phenomenon. In an age when comic book characters were only visible in actual comic books, Kiss brought escapist fantasy into millions of homes. If the appeal of the superhero is now measured in box office billions and endless blockbuster franchises, then here is the story of an era when that desire manifested itself in sales of lunchboxes and trash cans, necklaces and action figures. This is a tell-all book of a very different kind, but the story comes through loud and clear.

Jon Hotten

THE INSIDE TRACK

Cheap Trick, 1977 vintage. L-R: Tom Petersson (bass), Bun E. Carlos (drums), Rick Nielsen (guitar), Robin Zander (vocals and guitar)

CONEY HATCH BASSIST AND VOCALIST **ANDY CURRAN** (SEEN HERE WITH ROBIN ZANDER) IS A CONFIRMED **CHEAP TRICK** NUT! SO WHO BETTER TO GIVE YOU A STEER ON HOW TO GET THE VERY BEST OUT OF THE ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS BAND'S RECORDED OUTPUT?

"I AM A CHEAP Trick superfan. My wife will tell you I'm obsessed. When we were driving for two hours to see the band outside of Toronto not long ago she asked me an interesting question: 'How many times do you need to see Cheap Trick?' Well how long is a piece of string?

"I truly love the band and have done since the late '70s. I was first introduced to their music by original Coney Hatch guitarist Paul Van Remortel when he came to rehearsals one day with a copy of their 'Heaven Tonight' record. 'Surrender' from that album was a hit on rock radio at that time, so we learned the number and it always went over very well. After that I went deep down the Cheap Trick rabbit hole and was hooked for life. I quickly bought copies of 'In Color' and the debut record and we eventually added 'He's A Whore' to our set list.

"I BOUGHT a ticket to see Cheap Trick for the first time at Massey Hall in Toronto on the 'Heaven Tonight' tour in 1978. On stage you had two rock gods in guitarist and vocalist Robin Zander and bassist Tom Petersson playing alongside two nerds, guitarist Rick Nielsen and drummer Bun E. Carlos. What an odd combination, but it totally worked. The band's 'left of centre' approach set Cheap Trick apart from many acts of that time. And Zander's sweet, intoxicating vocals, mixed with a kind of punk rock rawness, made them sound like no other act.

"The band opened that night with 'Hello There' and it was f*ckin' awesome! Rick Nielsen made the sign of the cross as Zander sang '*Elo Kiddies – whatcha gonna do when you get religion?*' All good Catholic boys could pick up on that! Bun E. Carlos had a cigarette stuck to his bottom lip while doing those long signature fills. And as a bassist myself I was gobsmacked to see and hear a 12-string bass for the first time in my life! Tom Petersson pumped out a wall of sound and his unorthodox playing gave me one more reason to fall for this unique band.

"Cheap Trick wrote great, radio-friendly rock anthems like 'Dream Police', 'If You Want My Love', 'Surrender' and 'I Want You To Want Me'. Yet there were also extreme departures like 'The Ballad Of TV Violence (I'm Not The Only Boy)', 'Big Eyes', 'Auf Wiedersehen' and the Beatles-y, sweet yet creepy 'Heaven Tonight'. None of those songs was at all radio-friendly.

"FAST FORWARD to 1982 and Coney Hatch have just been inked to a worldwide record deal. I get a call from our tour manager who tells me we have an opening slot at an football stadium called CNE on a three-band bill with Ted Nugent headlining and us opening the show. Guess who's the second act? Cheap Trick.

"I sheepishly introduced myself to Rick backstage, and he was curious, friendly and a little sarcastic. I watched the band's performance from the side of the stage and I pretty much died and went to heaven. Over the following years I'd see Cheap Trick many, many times. Through my friendship with their tour manager Carla Dragotti I'd often meet them and eventually struck up a friendship with pretty much my all-time favourite rock vocalist, Mr Robin Zander. I still can't believe that one!

"MY LATEST 'pinch me' moment came last summer when Cheap Trick played the Budweiser Amphitheatre in Toronto. One of the crew members asked if I had a song request. Thinking he was pulling my leg, I said 'I haven't seen them play 'Auf Wiedersehen' since Massey Hall in the late '70s. That would be bad ass.' To my surprise during the gig Robin said, 'We have a song we'd like to play for a friend.' And they launched into 'Auffie'! They played a blistering version of my favourite song, proving this is a band that hasn't lost its teeth after 40-odd years.

"Cheap Trick are the perfect combination of power, sugar, grit, punk rawness, classic rock vibes, melody, originality, humour, love, longevity and perseverance. Plus they're really, really cool guys. The band have just announced a couple of shows near to my home in Toronto, and of course I'll be there. Even if I have to drive solo like a complete loner and stay at a ghetto-style motor lodge, I'll do it! Long live Cheap Trick."

Main photo: Getty Images/Michael Putland

THE ALL-TIME CLASSIC – 'HEAVEN TONIGHT' (1978)

"This record is the equivalent of a sports team coming together to win a championship. After two really good records in 'Cheap Trick' and 'In Color', this third album contains all the magic that took CT to the top in the late '70s. It's full of great songwriting and brilliant melodies, a classic combination of pop and power. There are any number of great tracks here, but let me first highlight 'Takin' Me Back' and 'How Are You', then direct you to 'On The Radio' and 'High Roller', the latter featuring some brilliant soaring Robin Zander vocals. We shouldn't ignore the band's first hit, 'Surrender', either, and the rockers amongst you will really appreciate 'Auf Wiedersehen' and 'Stiff Competition'. Credit to producer Tom Werman for stitching everything together to come up with one of the best sounding records of the band's career. 'Heaven Tonight' is absolutely bulletproof."

THE ONE FOR CONNOISSEURS – 'CHEAP TRICK' (1977)

"Given that this is the band's debut album, it's just amazing to listen to it now and hear all of the unexpected musical twists and turns it contains. I imagine that people listening to 'Cheap Trick' at the time might have found it disjointed, or felt that the band were still trying to find their way. In fact, though, the juxtaposition of styles and sounds became a common thread with Cheap Trick releases throughout their career. The raw production works really well on nasty-sounding songs like 'Hot Love', 'He's A Whore' and 'The Ballad Of TV Violence'. But then there are also some really beautiful numbers here, such as 'Mandocello', 'Taxman Mr Thief' and 'Oh Candy'. The lyrics are definitely out there, which very much wasn't the norm for rock bands at the time, and that's another reason why I like this curio so much."

THE ONE TO AVOID – 'WOKE UP WITH A MONSTER' (1994)

"To go back to my earlier sports analogy, this was the year when Cheap Trick didn't make the playoffs! My theory about 'Woke Up With A Monster' is that some doofus at their label or management felt the band needed outside songwriters to work with them, but the resulting album wasn't their finest hour. The cover was very dodgy too, and the last time I looked 'Woke Up With A Monster' was only available as a digital download. That might not be a bad thing, actually. Sorry, but this one is a miss. No one should ever mess with the inner workings of a band's core writing team unless they're completely out of ideas. Cheap Trick are never out of ideas."

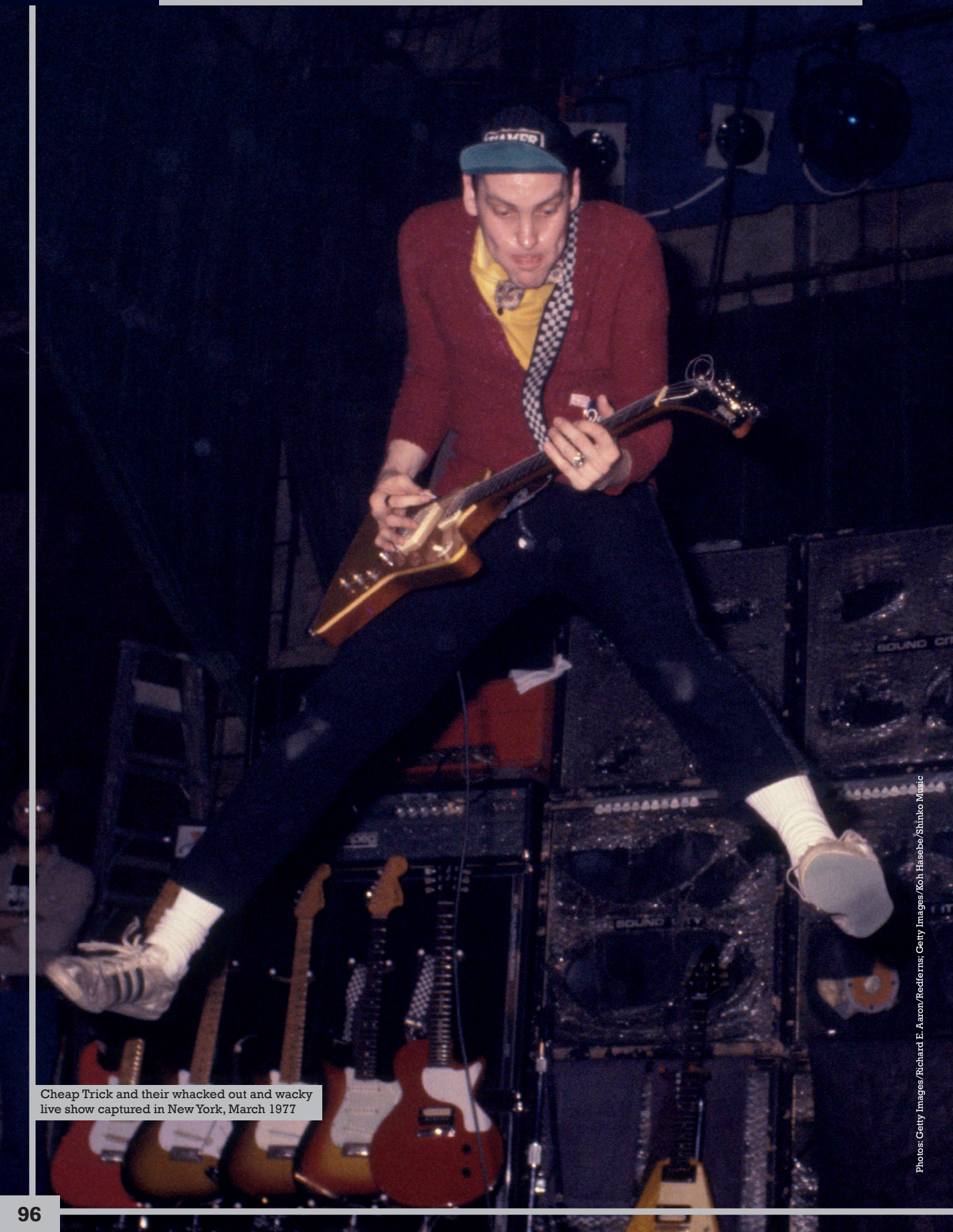
BEST FILM/VIDEO – *FROM TOKYO TO YOU* (2004) OR *BUDOKAN 30TH ANNIVERSARY DVD* (2008)

"I'm a little torn here, because both of these DVDs are 'must haves' for CT fans, so I listed both. The *Budokan* four-disc set is an amazing companion piece to the 'Cheap Trick At Budokan' live album that was first released in Japan in 1978. The concert was filmed for Japanese TV, but wasn't originally made available anywhere else, so it's pretty cool to get a visual after listening to that concert for so many years as a standalone audio piece. I love the subtitles here, and it's awesome to see the band at its peak feeding off 12,000 rabid fans. *From Tokyo To You* is pretty darn cool as well, featuring the original line-up and a no-frills rock set, together with hilarious between-song interviews. Who knew that Rick's dad was Bozo The Clown? Or that Tom worked in a chicken factory? Or that Robin was the voice of Rocky in the *Rocky And Bullwinkle* cartoon series? I'm sure 95 per cent of that stuff is made up, but it all makes *From Tokyo To You* feel like a mini *Spinal Tap* with the band's perfect deadpan delivery. Love it!"

THE RARITY – 'CHEAP TRICK' (1997)

"Commonly referred to as 'Cheap Trick '97', this album came and went so quickly that if you blinked you would have missed it. Sadly, the label 'Cheap Trick' appeared on, Red Ant, went bust not long after the album was released, which is why it's a well-kept secret. Nonetheless, this was a flashback to the golden sound of Cheap Trick, a brilliant mix of flat-out raw and edgy rockers, together with two of the most beautiful mid-tempo ballad-ish songs the band have ever written, 'Shelter' and 'It All Comes Back To You'. Zander's vocals are exceptional on 'Anytime', 'You Let A Lotta People Down' and 'Baby No More', while the sound and style is very reminiscent of the first Cheap Trick album. I wish the band hadn't had such bad luck here, but if you can find 'Cheap Trick' in the delete bins pick it up. You won't regret it."

THE INSIDE TRACK



Cheap Trick and their whacked out and wacky live show captured in New York, March 1977

Photos: Getty Images/Richard E. Aaron/Redferns; Getty Images/Koh Hasebe/Shinko Music

ANDY CURRAN'S CHEAP TRICK PLAYLIST

'HE'S A WHORE'
(from 'Cheap Trick', 1977)
"This punk-metal anthem really kicks ass and the lyrical subject matter of a male gigolo taking the money and doing what I call 'The Grin F*ck' is just brilliant writing. I quickly convinced my Coney Hatch band mates to let me sing this song back in the day. Maybe it's time to bring it back now..."

'COME ON, COME ON'
(from 'In Color', 1977)
"This track comes out punching like something from The Who's 'Who's Next' album. It's very anthemic, features yet another great vocal performance by Robin Zander and has gang background vocals that are ultra catchy. If you really want to dig deep, check out Steve Albini's production of the song from 1997. Albini re-recorded the entire 1977 'In Color' album with the band, but it was never officially released, though the songs were leaked onto the Internet so you can get to hear them there. It's pretty much like the original record – but with its hair seriously messed up."

'AUF WIEDERSEHEN'
(from 'Heaven Tonight', 1978)
"This features a blistering 12-string bass intro and a classic Bun E. Carlos drum intro. Again, it's a cool hybrid of punk meets power rock, which very few bands have ever been able to pull off. featuring a main guitar line that never leaves you and some very clever lyrics. It's hands down my favourite Cheap Trick song and I never tire of it."

'NEED YOUR LOVE'
(from 'Cheap Trick At Budokan', 1978)
"This song appeared live on the 1978 'At Budokan' recording and as a studio track on the 'Dream Police' album the following year. I think the live version is far superior and way heavier – a sludgy rock anthem that builds and builds before eventually going double time on the drums for the outro. The vocal melody is truly haunting and though I've steered clear of this comparison up to now I'll mention the Beatles influences just this once."

'DREAM POLICE'
(from 'Dream Police', 1979)
"A theme song for all of us insomniacs! Cheap Trick have written a bunch of tunes where they start with a chorus right out of the gate, and if you're going to do that, then you'd better make sure it's a good one. I'm loving the 12-string bass here, and this really is a hooky little bugger. The mid-section where Rick does his talking bit is always fun too!"

THREE TRACKS TO AVOID

'YOU SAY JUMP'
(from 'Next Position Please', 1983)
"Todd Rundgren's production on this number feels like something bizarre from the *Top Gun* soundtrack, with its odd keyboard sounds and super-poppy, thin guitar tone. Even worse, the bass sounds like a bad Devo song. Cheap Trick sounding like Devo?! The band have been neutered here and I'm really not a fan."

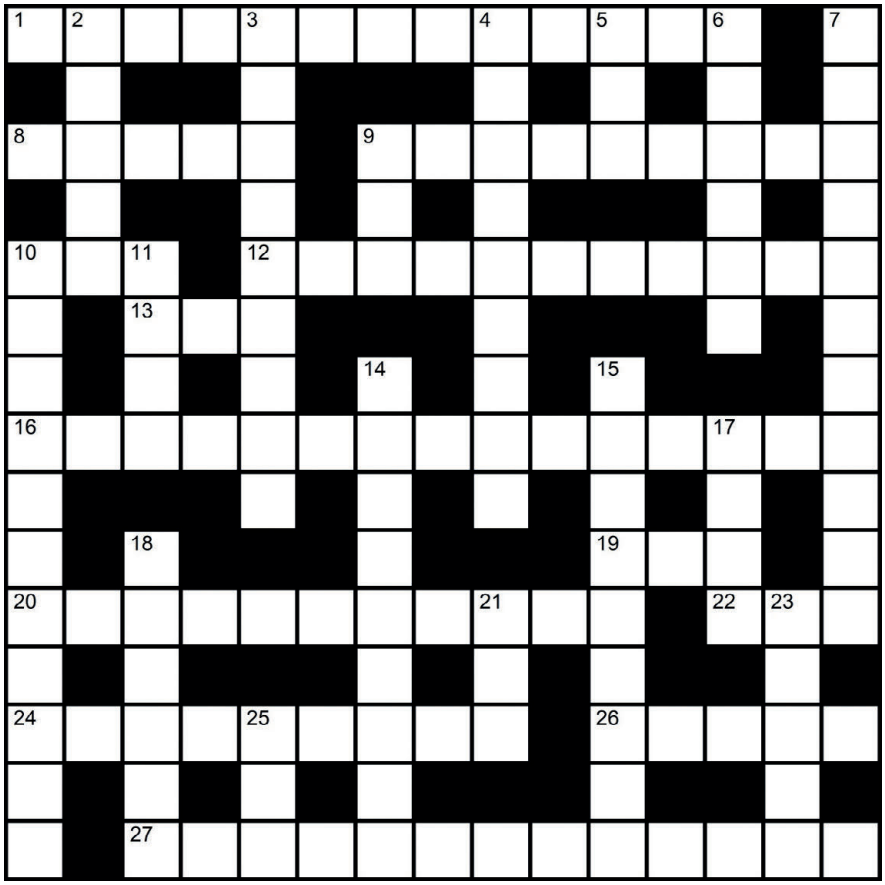
'MAN-U-LIP-U-LATOR
(from 'The Doctor', 1986)
"A poor number from an album that was way overproduced. At times this song doesn't even sound like Cheap Trick with all the keyboard parts and triggered drum samples. This is so far removed from the band's original sound that I'm really not sure how they ended up so far off course."

'ROCK ALL NIGHT'
(from 'Standing On The Edge', 1985)
"This one reminds me of a throwaway Kiss song with its super clichéd lyrics (that title? Yeuch!) and equally naff guitar riff. Who the heck let this one onto an album? I hope whoever it was has lived to regret taking that particular decision."

Is this really what the band were thinking of when they wrote 'Dream Police'?

CROSSWORD

How's the old grey matter doing? Think you're ready to arm-wrestle with the legendary *Rock Candy* crossword?



The *Rock Candy* crossword is compiled by former *Kerrang!* writer **Jason Arnopp**, whose book *From The Front Lines Of Rock* gathers the highlights from his career in journalism. Featuring vintage interviews with the likes of Iron Maiden, Metallica, Kiss, Guns N' Roses, Bon Jovi and Queensrÿche, it's out on Kindle via Amazon sites worldwide or can be bought direct from Arnopp in several formats, via **payhip.com/Arnopp.**

16 ACROSS: NIGHT RANGER

7 DOWN: EUROPE

24 ACROSS: FAITH NO MORE

15 DOWN: THE CULT

ACROSS

1 Rush's third album from 1975 had a touch of the sword and sorcery about it. (6,2,5)
8 The year 2000 saw AC/DC facing the world with a 'Stiff ----- Lip'. (5)
9 The vocal powerhouse of Heart. (3,6)
10 --- Reynolds, guitarist who formed Malice in 1981. (3)
12 Judas Priest launched into this spiffing number straight after instrumental 'The Hellion' on 1982's 'Screaming For Vengeance' album. (8,3)
13 A form of transport or the first name of one of America's greatest rock bands. (3)
16 The Night Ranger song that gave us an unforgettable soundtrack to the cocaine madness scene in classic 1997 film *Boogie Nights*. (6,9)
19 Aerosmith refer to a farmyard animal on a track from 1977's 'Draw The Line' album. (3)
20 Guitarist Mick Jones was a member of this band before founding Foreigner. (6,5)
22 'All We ---', the opening number on Warlock's 1987 release, 'Triumph And Agony'. (3)
24 The polite title of Faith No More's second album, '--------- Yourself.' (9)
26 'Antisocial' French rockers. (5)
27 The cover of Metallica's 'Ride The Lightning' depicted one of these floating in a storm. (8,5)

For answers go to our website *www.rockcandymag.com*

DOWN

2 Asia's 1983 album was one for the males. (5)
3 Saxon would never do it. But Rainbow were only too ready... (9)
4 Queensrÿche offered 'No ---------' on their 1984 outing 'The Warning'. (9)
5 The record company that the Sex Pistols weren't too keen on. (1,1,1)
6 Iron Maiden found themselves '------ Words (Big 'Orra)' on their 'Powerslave' album. (6)
7 Watch out when you're using the railways! There's '------ -- --- Track', according to Europe on their 'The Final Countdown' release. (6,2,3)
9 Cold Swedish female metallers, Ice ---. (3)
10 The biggest hit from Rick Springfield's 1981 album 'Working Class Dog'. (7,4)
11 French guitarist ---- Choir, who's worked with the likes of Little Bob Story and Steve Lukather. (4)
14 First three words in the title of a Willie Dixon song covered by Led Zeppelin. (1,4,4)
15 The word missing in these lines from The Cult's 'Love Removal Machine'. "*Having trouble with my direction/Upside down --------- reaction.*" (9)
17 The highly geographic second album from Slipknot, referencing their home state. (4)
18 Faster Pussycat spotted a '------ In Front Of Me'. (6)
21 & 25 Down '--- On ---', a 1982 album by Cheap Trick. (3,3)
23 Surname of the Quo man who talks too much. (5)
25 See 21 Down

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EUROPE
'THE FINAL COUNTDOWN'

AVIATOR - 'S/T'

GODDO - 'S/T'

GODDO - 'WHO CARES'

GODDO - 'AN ACT OF GODDO'

BATON ROUGE - 'SHAKE YOUR SOUL'

FRANK MARINO
'THE POWER OF ROCK AND ROLL'

RIOT - 'RESTLESS BREED'

ORPHAN - 'LONELY AT NIGHT'

NIGHT - 'S/T'

NIGHT - 'LONG DISTANCE'

BITE THE BULLET - 'S/T'

MAHOGANY RUSH - 'LIVE'

STEVE JONES - 'MERCY'

STEVE JONES
'FIRE AND GASOLINE'

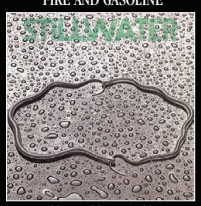
SAMMY HAGAR - 'DANGER ZONE'

THE SCREAM - 'LET IT SCREAM'

EUROPE - 'OUT OF THIS WORLD'

MAX WEBSTER
'A MILLION VACATIONS'

ALPHA CENTAURI - 'S/T'



STILLWATER - 'S/T'

STILLWATER
'I RESERVE THE RIGHT'

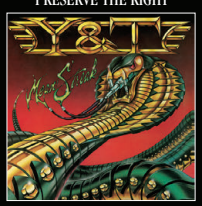
BROWNSVILLE - 'AIR SPECIAL'

PETER CETERA - 'S/T'

SHADOW KING - 'S/T'

Y&T - 'EARTHSHAKER'

Y&T - 'BLACK TIGER'



Y&T - 'MEAN STREAK'

LEGS DIAMOND - 'S/T'

LEGS DIAMOND
'A DIAMOND IS A HARD ROCK'

LEGS DIAMOND - 'FIRE POWER'

COMING SOON

ANGEL - 'WHITE HOT'

ANGEL - 'SINFUL'

ANGEL - 'LIVE WITHOUT A NET'

FASTWAY - 'ALL FIRED UP'

ORPHAN - 'SALUTE'

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